

BACEVICH: LESSONS OF IRAQ ■ HITCHENS ON SOUTH AFRICA

JULY 19, 2004

The American Conservative

Who Are We?

Immigration
and American
Identity

By John O'Sullivan



WRONG WAY NADER

In his "Play for the Right" (June 21), Ralph Nader, like California's Roy Riegels did for 65 yards in the 1929 Rose Bowl, is running towards the wrong goal line. Mr. Nader calls for an unspecified amount of "humanitarian assistance" to the Iraqis until they "get on their feet," a \$10-an-hour minimum wage, "all the rights and benefits of American workers" for illegal aliens, a 35 percent tax on estates over \$10 million, some level of taxation on "things we like least," universal health insurance, and the repeal of President Bush's tax cuts. Who on the Right is for any of this?

In addition, Mr. Nader says that we are hated abroad because our "anything-goes-values are profoundly offensive" to Muslims' "religion and culture." Then, amazingly, he reveals that he embodies some of those "profoundly offensive" values by saying he's for the "choice" of killing unborn babies by abortion and that he favors homosexual marriage.

GARY MICHAEL JANIS

Hanover, Md.

COMMON CAUSE

As a self-styled progressive, I was extremely impressed with your interview of Ralph Nader. You clearly demonstrated that progressives and conservatives have many shared values and that we are all outraged at the growing power of global corporations, aided and abetted by big government.

Your interview was a real eye-opener to me. It showed that the conventional labels of "conservative," "liberal," "progressive," etc. don't adequately convey the interests and beliefs of Americans. In actuality, we are all united in opposition to the growing power of the elites. The current administration has demonstrated its callous disregard for the interests of Americans, and I fear that a Democratic administration would be the same, albeit kinder and gentler. Once again, thanks for this inspired interview.

RICK GARDNER

Camarillo, Calif.

THIS YEAR'S NEW DEMOCRAT

George Bush has led this country down to the end of Lonely Street with heart-breaking results for America's moral authority to lead the world. Even if all of his ineptness in fiscal and social programs, as noted in your "Dilemma on the Right" (June 7), are forgotten or forgiven, Mr. Bush's fanatical hatred for Saddam Hussein and the price both Americans and Iraqis have had to pay because of it qualifies him as one of the worst presidents in American history.

I do not believe America has ever invaded a sovereign nation without just cause before the Iraqi debacle. Nor do I believe America has ever stood accused of the kinds of abuses more often attributed to fascist or communist regimes. The reasons for the invasion have all been discredited. Just as the Germans were too blinded by "patriotism" to see through Hitler's Reichstag Fire ruse, Americans seem to be too blinded by the "super-patriotism" inspired by 9/11 to see what Mr. Bush has done to America's reputation.

Despite all of this, you still regard the upcoming election as a dilemma? During the previous administration, Mr. Clinton embarrassed the office of the president. Mr. Bush has shamed America. Although I have never voted for a Democrat in my life, I will vote for anybody to get this lunatic out of office.

TOM BRENNAN

Gilbert, Ariz.

CEASEFIRE

As a great fan of your magazine, I am distressed by the degree of Bush-bashing in your pages. You may be entirely right in what you say about Bush, but sometimes pragmatism should trump ideology, as I believe is the case here, where stands like yours will help ensure a Kerry victory.

As you know, Kerry represents one of the most radicalized factions of the Democratic Party. His anti-American early adulthood, moral ambivalence, unrelenting negativism, and grotesquely

oversized personal ego make him strikingly unfit to be the leader of this country. His slandering of American troops in the 1970s, his self-motivated "negotiating" with Ortega and the communist Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and his consistent voting record to defund our military and our intelligence should disqualify him from consideration. The best ideological stance your magazine could take would be to concentrate pragmatically on Kerry's abundant faults and leave bashing Bush until after the election.

RICHARD BRODIE

Pacific Palisades, Calif.

AMERICAN INDIAN

I am delighted with your publication and its commitment to the ideals of the United States Constitution. When I took the oath of U.S. citizenship back in 1997, I swore to uphold the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Many of our leaders have surrendered this duty and honor.

I applaud your dedication to "true conservatism," which is modeled on the farewell address of George Washington and his forewarning against entangling alliances, and was reiterated by Thomas Jefferson, the author of our Declaration of Independence.

I am an immigrant from India and proud of my heritage, but my allegiance first and foremost is to the United States and to the republic that it was founded as, which has been eloquently stated numerous times by your distinguished editor, a rarity in these challenging times. My best wishes for the continuing success of your enlightening publication.

SRINIDHI ANANTHARAMIAH

Melbourne, Fla.

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CHRIS HIERS

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HE JUST KEEPS GOING AND GOING AND GOING AND ...

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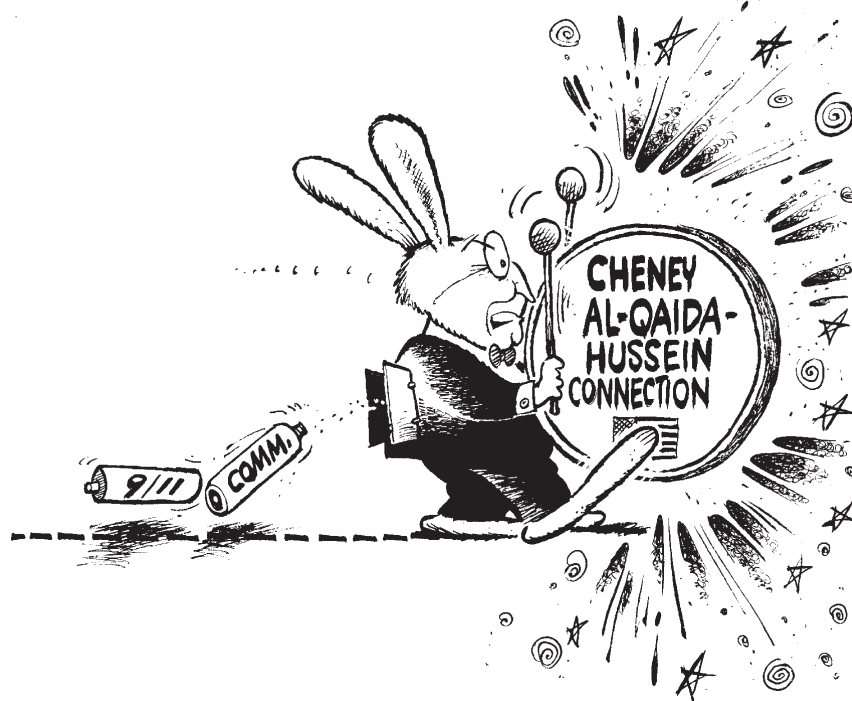
COCKEYED ADVENTURE

The 9/11 commission's conclusion that there was no meaningful collaboration between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda drew this off-the-record response from a White House adviser: "If you discount the relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda, then you discount the proposition that [the Iraq War is] part of the war on terror. If it's not part of the war on terror, then what is it—some cockeyed adventure on the part of George W. Bush?"

What is it, indeed? Historians will be asking that for decades to come. No weapons of mass destruction found after 15 months of searching, no meaningful ties to anti-American terrorists. In 1994, the commission found, Saddam rebuffed bin Laden's bid to establish terrorist training camps in Iraq.

But the president and Dick Cheney are still talking up al-Qaeda's ties to Saddam, apparently calculating that a falsehood, repeated again and again, causes far less political damage than acknowledgement of error. (Khrushchev's famous secret speech truthfully acknowledging Stalin's bloody reign of terror did little to advance the cause of world communism.)

What is the truth? A "cockeyed adventure on the part of George W. Bush"? Perhaps. But those outside the White House—especially those who have known President Bush and his father for many years—are given to blaming the neocons: "George Bush could not have dreamed this up by himself. He's not capable of it," is the kind of thing one hears from them. We do know that the administration has been honeycombed with people who have had instigation of an American war against Iraq on the top of their agenda for many years. How they turned the ship of state to accommodate their aims is a topic that history will not soon grow tired of.



[POLITICS]

WHAT'S NOT TO HATE?

Ted Kennedy must have found a magic lamp—that or Bill Frist has surreptitiously surrendered his role as Senate Majority Leader to the senior Democratic senator from Massachusetts. In June, the Senate voted 65 to 33 to attach a Kennedy-sponsored hate-crimes measure to this year's defense authorization bill. The measure extends legislation from 1968 that federalized certain crimes committed on account of race, religion, or national origin to apply also to crimes against homosexuals, women, and the disabled.

Is there an epidemic of such crimes going unpunished at the state level? Not exactly. In the case of the most infamous anti-homosexual murder in recent times, the killing of Matthew Shepard, the perpetrators were each sentenced to serve two consecutive life terms. So why is the GOP-controlled Senate further federalizing the criminal code?

Kennedy's co-sponsor on the other side of the aisle, Oregon Sen. Gordon Smith, said, "When people are being stoned in the public square, we ought to come to their rescue." Smith might mistakenly believe that he is representing Afghanistan rather than Oregon. But

then, he also provides another possibility: "Before you get to marriage, get to hate," referring to the upcoming late-July Senate vote on a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. Conservatives should not play this game: gay marriage can be stopped without giving Teddy Kennedy what he wants.

[IMMIGRATION]

TEDDY & THE LAWBREAKERS

Trumped up hate isn't the only issue keeping Sen. Kennedy and his bipartisan friends occupied. Kennedy and Larry Craig (R-Idaho) have promised to attach legislation offering amnesty to illegal-alien agricultural workers to every bill that comes up for a Senate vote for the remainder of this year.

Unable to win majority support for the idea that illegal farm-workers should be rewarded for violating the law and our borders, the two senators hope to use this legislative tactic to ram their bill through anyway. Who, after all, wants to vote against the defense appropriations bill in an election year?

The Kennedy-Craig rider is a bad idea that has been tried before. Spokesmen for the immigration-reform group FAIR liken the measure to a 1986 agricultural

amnesty provision that was rife with fraud and legalized 1.3 million aliens—including Mahmud and Mohammed Abouhalima, two New York cab drivers who had nothing to do with agriculture but would go on to participate in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

With the threat of terror looming even larger today, and with many of our own citizens out of work, Americans are understandably not eager for a repeat. As the president discovered earlier this year, the public overwhelmingly rejects amnesty in all its forms. That's why open-borders enthusiasts in Washington have been reduced to legislative gimmicks to try to force their agenda through. Tying up Senate business for the benefit of lawbreakers and the cheap-labor lobby is unconscionable, and voters would do well to remember which politicians from both parties have engaged in it to thwart their will.

[CULTURE]

MUD ON THE MALL

When planners broke ground on the National Museum of the American Indian in September 2001, *Indian Country Today* declared "one of the biggest cultural coups yet," and the Mall's altered landscape proclaims their triumph.

Stand in the center of our country's town square. At one end, the Capitol, all ancient angles and classical forms. At the other, the Washington Monument, where math asks art to dance. The Mall's architecture isn't without mistakes—all modern—but most of the buildings along its banks, from the Archives to the National Gallery, read from a similar canon and understand that beauty and symmetry have something to do with each other. Now comes rebellion against all of that, on the Mall's last parcel of buildable land: a postmodern pueblo with nary a right angle nor traditional reference. And because diversity is the

new trump, failure to appreciate is not only benighted but an affront to Indian culture.

The \$219 million project claims a "curvilinear form, evoking a wind-sculpted mesa." More accurately, each level undulates to a different rhythm, evoking a disordered mess. It is as if the designer made a fetish of chaos, knowing no one would object because of smallpox and manifest destiny and the Trail of Tears.

Spiro Kostof wrote, "Architecture is a social act," and through that lens, this museum makes sense. It knows no history, honors no idiom, sings only itself. In that way, it may be a fitting monument to the age, but it's impossible to stand in its shadow and gaze at the columned classics without feeling like something got lost on the way.

[BELTWAY]

FUZZY MATH

Lunch special at the State Department cafeteria: crow. Secretary Powell's ace number-crunchers recently released a report on worldwide terrorist attacks in 2003. By their estimate, terror had fallen to its lowest level since 1969. Tell it to Israel and Gaza, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan ... and State decided to take a second look at that report. Apparently its analysts don't get out much.

When Democrats began speculating that the rosy retrospective might be politically motivated, Powell admitted "a numbers error," but maintained, "Nobody was out to cook the books"—a disclaimer that would have been more credible had he not added, "We can't get away with that now."

No word on the previous protocol. No sense that someone at State should have questioned the counterintuitive conclusion. No admission of where the faulty data came from or who might be to blame. "Errors crept in," Powell conceded. On "little cat feet," perhaps? ■

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Playing Into the Enemy's Hands

While America has the weaponry and resources to win the war against Islamic terrorism, there remains a question as to whether we have the wisdom and maturity.

Watching reaction to the beheading of Paul Johnson by an al-Qaeda cell in Saudi Arabia, one is reminded anew of Burke's insight that great empires and small minds go ill together.

When the news hit on June 18, some talking heads on cable TV demanded immediate U.S. retaliation. Others urged withdrawal of all Americans from a kingdom that could not or would not protect them. Still others began hectoring the Saudis and demanding instant reform and democratization. Otherwise, we get out.

Adopting any of these courses would have made the al-Qaeda atrocity a success. For while these acts of terror are satanic, they are also diabolical. They were purposeful. They were designed to provoke Americans into reacting emotionally, in a way certain to injure ourselves and damage our interests in the Arab world.

Al-Qaeda knows it cannot defeat the United States. Only Americans can do that—as we did in Vietnam. Yet, again and again, as with our invasion of Iraq, we respond as al-Qaeda could only hope we would. We must begin to ask ourselves not only “Why do they hate us?” but, “What are their war aims?” and “How do they expect us to respond to this outrage?”

With the beheading of Johnson, that al-Qaeda cell seems to have had several tactical goals: to show the Arab street that al-Qaeda at least was paying America back for Abu Ghraib by executing an enemy who kept the Apaches flying; to

terrify Westerners into fleeing the kingdom, thus crippling its economy and advancing the revolution; to drive a wedge between Riyadh and Washington.

Al-Qaeda's strategic goal, which even Saudis belatedly realize, is to humiliate, isolate, and bring down the monarchy and deliver up the world's oil storehouse to an Islamist regime that will use it as a weapon against the hated infidel, the United States of America.

Thus, al-Qaeda's acolytes in the Arab world must have rejoiced at the reaction the beheading provoked in the United States. For any American attack on Saudi Arabia or any hectoring of the monarchy or any wholesale withdrawal of Americans would advance their goal of isolating and dethroning the government and replacing it with an Islamic revolutionary regime.

But why would Americans, unless they are unthinking, stupid, or malicious, advance the very outcome al-Qaeda seeks? Can anyone believe that, should the 7000 princes go to the wall, 7000 liberal democrats will replace them? After Afghanistan and Iraq, do we still not know that when a state is destroyed, it requires years to rebuild, and the men with guns fill the vacuum? In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is Big Casino. Lose that one, and we have lost the game.

Yet there are forces building both here and in the Middle East that seek precisely that outcome.

Islamic radicals preaching revolution and purification, who have won the

hearts and minds of many of the devout Saudi and Islamic young, want to bring down the monarchy. The Israeli Right loathes the House of Saud for its support of the Palestinians and uses every opportunity to undermine it in the United States.

Sharon's neoconservative allies here in America have called for the overthrow of the monarchy, declaring it an enemy, not an ally, in the War on Terror. And, after 9/11, when 15 Saudis were used in the attacks that killed 3000 people, Saudi Arabia has few vocal friends and defenders among America's elites or the people.

And, indeed, past Saudi support of Hamas, Islamic extremists, and radical Wahabbi clerics has helped put them in the situation they are in today.

Yet, that does not excuse Americans for a lack of thought. If the Saudi monarchy goes down, who and what do we think is going to replace it? History has shown repeatedly that mindless support of revolution almost invariably leaves Western Man worse, not better off. The progressive world rejoiced in the overthrow of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and got revolution, Robespierre, the Terror, and Napoleon.

Progressive opinion, including Woodrow Wilson, was delighted we no longer had the embarrassment of Czar Nicholas II as an ally in the war to make the world safe for democracy. We were soon coping with Lenin and Stalin. That blunder almost brought an end to Western civilization. Now the idiot savants are calling for the overthrow of the Saudi monarchy.

Again, the question: do we Americans have the maturity and wisdom to lead the West, let alone run an empire? ■

[identity crisis]

Who Are We?

Samuel Huntington's new book forces a debate on immigration and American destiny.

By John O'Sullivan

SAMUEL HUNTINGTON'S BOOK was notorious even before the page proofs were sent out to magazine editors for the pre-publication of extracts. Rumors had circulated for at least a year beforehand that the author of *The Clash of Civilizations* and other distinguished works of political theory was about to produce a book on immigration that was not wholly in favor of it. In fact, while *Who Are We?* deals in detail with current immigration to the U.S., the book as a whole is about the wider and more important topic of national identity. As we shall see, that is making it more controversial rather than less. Still, the first intimations of controversy were inspired by the astounding prospect of an anti-immigration book from one of the nation's most respected political scientists and a fully paid-up member of the American establishment. If Sam Huntington broke ranks, then elite support for high levels of immigration might fracture at the very moment that the Bush administration was proposing an open-borders policy. And that would be high politics as well as intellectual controversy.

Excitement rose higher when the first extract of *Who Are We?* was published in *Foreign Policy* magazine. This turned out, as suspected, to be devoted to immigration—and to a particularly contentious aspect of it.

In his book, Huntington argues that post-1965 immigration is very different from previous waves in two significant ways. In the first place, it consists of continuously high levels of immigration. Previous immigration was either low but continuous (e.g., from the Revolution to the 1840s) or a series of high peaks followed by low troughs (e.g., the second great wave of 1880-1920 followed by 40 years of low immigration under the restrictive quotas of the 1920s). Continuous high immigration tends to retard the assimilation of immigrants into the host community and to foster ethnic ghettos that then accommodate semi-permanent ethnic diasporas. All of these trends will be maximized if the immigration occurs in conditions of official bilingualism and multiculturalism rather than of Americanization. Immigrants will then be less likely to assimilate and more likely to retain ethnic identities and links with home.

The second difference is that the new immigration intake is much less diverse than the immigrants in earlier periods. In brief, one half of new legal immigrants come from Latin America—and 25 percent of them from a single national source, namely Mexico. Even in the absence of other factors, this would hinder assimilation. If immigrants speak several languages, they have a clear

incentive to master the *lingua franca* that will help them to communicate both with each other and with the native-born. If they speak one language, however, they are more easily able to continue living in a linguistic enclave that is an overseas version of home, such as Miami, where it is the native-born who feel foreign.

That central difficulty in the case of Latinos in general is aggravated in the case of Mexicans by several other characteristics. Again in brief, Mexican Americans are especially numerous—25 percent and rising of the total of legal immigrants. Their numbers are further supplemented because they are the overwhelming majority of illegal immigrants. They come from a nation contiguous to the U.S. with a long and porous border. They are regionally concentrated in the Southwest (as were Cubans in Florida) so that they are more likely to concentrate themselves in linguistic enclaves. They seem likely to keep coming indefinitely—i.e., in the absence of strong official discouragement, the supply of Mexican arrivals is for practical purposes infinite. And finally Mexicans have a historical presence in the region—there are even some who cherish irredentist claims on what they call “Aztlán.”

Making these and other points, Huntington concluded that there was a real

possibility that the American Southwest might become in time another Quebec—namely, a region of the U.S. where the dominant language and culture would be Hispanic—in a Nuevo United States that would be a bilingual and bicultural society. And as Quebec and Belgium demonstrate in different ways, bilingualism distorts and obstructs democratic governance.

It was, of course, this second “inflammatory” theme that *Foreign Policy* magazine made its front-page lead article. The editors of *Foreign Policy* cannot be wholly acquitted of coat-trailing here. They know that controversy sells and set out to have the maximum impact. Still, even they were probably surprised by all the results that followed—namely, an article that everyone talked about, superb advance publicity for the book, and a string of insulting and threatening remarks about Huntington—“racist,” “nativist,” “xenophobe,” and the rest—in newspaper columns and *FP*’s own letters section.

Three points emerge in retrospect from these early criticisms. First, almost all the replies simply ignored the vast wealth of social science, census, and polling data that the author laid out in

destroyed if he had not armored himself in advance against it.

Some of the critics, however, promptly dealt with the difficulty that they could not refute what he *had* said by refuting things he *had not* said but would have said if he had been the unreconstructed bigot they desperately wanted to wallop. Several denounced him for relying on the “lazy Mexican stereotype.” In fact, he had pointed out that Mexicans’ propensity for hard work led *inter alia* to the displacement and reduced incomes of low-paid native-born American workers. True, he had also quoted Mexican and Hispanic writers to the effect that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans were less inclined than Americans to believe that hard work was likely to lead to success—and that they were held back by that. Yet this argument is so different from the “lazy Mexican stereotype” that they could be confused only by minds already disabled by ideological fanaticism. It is worth noting, though, that falsely accusing others of relying on stereotypes is fast becoming stereotypical in itself.

Second, when his critics did seek to refute his array of evidence, they mostly got it wrong. Sometimes they got it wrong in respectably complicated ways.

dence, he had merely pointed out that such feelings were likely to be offset by a range of other influences over time—notably, that under multiculturalism they might assimilate not into Americanism but into a subordinate ethnic identity that was ambivalent at best towards the U.S. He also cited evidence to suggest that this was happening—indeed that the longer Mexicans lived in the U.S., the less they identified with America and American values, very unlike earlier generations of immigrants. Above all, as John Fonte has pointed out (both reviewing Huntington and responding to Elliot in *National Review*), on the key question of patriotic assimilation—i.e., do immigrants identify themselves primarily as Americans or prefer some other identity?—Huntington has the better of the argument. According to a Pew Hispanic Center study taken after Sept. 11—a date and event that had demonstrated the emptiness of Huntington’s nativist anxieties according to Louis Menand in the *New Yorker*—55 percent of Americans of Mexican descent said that they considered themselves Mexican “first,” 25 percent chose “Latino” or “Hispanic” as their primary identity, and only 18 percent chose “American.” That is not conclusive proof of national disintegration, but it is worrying—not least because reluctance to embrace an American identity is not confined to Hispanic- or Mexican-Americans. Fonte quotes a study of Muslims in Los Angeles showing that only 10 percent of such immigrants felt more allegiance to America than to a Muslim country. Elliot’s citation of more optimistic statistics is not false, but it is partial and complacent.

Other critics got it wrong in simple and straightforward ways. Tamar Jacoby of the Manhattan Institute, who seems to have set herself up as a One-Woman Anti-Huntington Truth Squad, sending media organizations an offer to be

THIS ARGUMENT IS SO DIFFERENT FROM THE “LAZY MEXICAN STEREOTYPE” THAT THEY COULD BE CONFUSED ONLY BY MINDS ALREADY DISABLED BY IDEOLOGICAL FANATICISM.

support of his thesis. Huntington has been reproved by otherwise respectful critics for the sheer volume of survey evidence he deploys since it inevitably slows down the book’s readability. But these spluttering and indignant responses justify its presence. They show that the weight of prejudice against his argument is such that he would have been

Writing in *Time* magazine, Michael Elliot produced polling data that showed Mexicans expressing admiration for the U.S. and sharply criticized Huntington for not taking this into account. But Huntington had not denied that many Mexicans were grateful for the opportunities given to them by the U.S. In a subtle examination of the full range of evi-

interviewed in order to correct his errors, declares, "Huntington also mistakes what it means to assimilate. We as a nation have never asked immigrants to buy into the particulars of our culture, Anglo or otherwise." This confident assertion will astonish (in addition to the world) Norman Podhoretz who, in his autobiographical writings, has written powerfully of "the brutal bargain" whereby immigrants and their children surrendered their cultural identities and transformed themselves into imitation WASPs. It also overlooks the "Americanization" campaigns of both government and private industry, the English language proficiency test in citizenship examinations, and even the Battle of the Bulge, when G.I.s tested each other on such cultural particulars as the name of Betty Grable's husband in order to separate the Americans out from Otto Skorzeny's infiltrators.

The final resort of critics when faced with evidence they don't like—especially statements by irredentists claiming that the American Southwest is destined to return to Mexico—was either "well, they don't represent anyone" (even when the speaker was the spokesman for an irredentist organization) or "well, they don't really mean it." There is no answer to that. Nor is any answer needed.

But the third point is more worrying. An alarming number of critics, some apparently academics, denounced Huntington's arguments as "poisonous," "incendiary," "unabashed racism," and so forth in a highly intemperate fashion, while misquoting and misunderstanding his actual arguments. Professor Bruce E. Wright of California State at Fullerton remarked that the article was an affront not only to Hispanics and Catholics (a Catholic myself, I had failed to be affronted) but also to "those of us"—such *sang froid!*—"whose identity is not so shallow as to be threatened by a massive invasion of others." The Rev.

Edward Lopez of New York thought that Huntington was "threatened by diversity" and "frightened by the world around him." Patricia Seed of Rice University lamented "the arrogance of an East Coast Brahmin." There was the usual irrelevant blather about how earlier Huntingtons had measured skulls and dismissed the potential of now successful immigrant groups. And there was a theme running through almost all

ism"—even when, or particularly when, the orthodoxy is a minority opinion and the majority has invariably rejected any clear expression of it.

The first effect of these attacks—and the controversy they generated—was to make people want to read the book. (At the National Airport bookshop where I bought it, I got their last copy a day after publication.) But the book they bought was very different from the article that

HUNTINGTON BELIEVES THAT **AMERICA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY** AND THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND TRADITIONS THAT SUSTAIN IT ARE **UNDER ATTACK**.

of these critiques—the America of Huntington's youth was being replaced by a better, more vibrant, and more just America, one of diversity and multiculturalism. To resist this evolution in defense of a past America was a sign of nostalgia at best, of wicked nativist racism at worst.

It is tempting to dismiss these denunciations as a cry for help. But they must be taken more seriously. After all, several letter-writers went to the lengths of arguing that Huntington's article should not have been published and that *Foreign Policy* should apologize for printing it. It seems reasonable to infer that people holding such views would not willingly allow such arguments to be expressed in their churches, schools, and colleges or treat fairly any student who submitted an essay advancing them. The later anonymous *Economist* reviewer, who was not uncritical of the book, was nonetheless upset by these outbursts that sought, in effect, to censor the rational expression of reasonable fears. They reflect a disturbing willingness to enforce an orthodoxy on dissenters and indicate a moral atmosphere that might best be described as "soft totalitarian-

ism" had prompted them to buy it. It is about much more than immigration. It is a comprehensive analysis of the threats that are undermining America's common culture and sense of itself. As such, it analyses virtually every major skirmish in the cultural wars of the last 40 years. And it analyzes them from a distinctly conservative standpoint.

Huntington is, of course, very far from being a "movement conservative," or even a neoconservative, let alone a paleo-conservative. He is a Democrat for starters, and he gave the *New York Times* interviewer a bad fit of cognitive dissonance by telling her that he opposed the war in Iraq and intended to vote for John Kerry. Yet almost 50 years ago, in an article in the *American Political Science Review*, he advanced what still remains the single best definition of conservatism: namely, that it is the set of ideas that men adopt in defense of their social and political institutions when they come under fundamental attack. Huntington believes that America's national identity and the social and political institutions and traditions that sustain it are under fundamental attack. His book is a conservative defense of them.

His starting point is that the American nation, as it developed from the colonial period to the 1960s, was built around certain core institutions, customs, and practices. To oversimplify brutally, these were the English language, dissenting Protestant Christianity, individualism and work ethic, and the political culture of the Founding Fathers with its emphasis on individual rights. Over time, later immigrants groups assimilated to the cultural core of “Anglo-Protestant Christianity” that evolved from these origins and assented to the American Creed that was its self-conscious political expression. They added spicy cultural contributions of their own, of course, but these did not fundamentally alter the national character. And by the late ’50s, “Americans were one nation of individuals with equal political rights, who shared a primarily Anglo-Protestant core culture, and were dedicated to the liberal-democratic principles of the American creed.”

In the course of outlining this national development, Huntington punctures several comforting national myths dear to both liberals and conservatives but false and sometimes destructive in their current implications. He points out, for instance, that the U.S. is not “a nation of immigrants.” It is a nation that was founded by settlers—who are very different from immigrants in that they establish a new polity rather than arrive in an existing one—and that has been occupied since by the descendants of those settlers and of immigrants who came later but who assimilated into the American nation. Americans therefore are under no moral obligation to accept anyone who wishes to immigrate on the spurious grounds that everyone is essentially an immigrant. Americans own America, so to speak, and may admit or refuse entry to outsiders on whatever grounds they think fit.

Huntington similarly demolishes the notion that America is a “proposition nation” and that its national identity consists of adherence to the liberal principles of the American Creed of liberty and individual rights. The American Creed is certainly part of America’s national identity—it is the distilled

culture or even of continental Roman Law. Are such anxieties alarmist? Judge Robert Bork has recently pointed out that U.S. Supreme Court justices have been advocating that American courts take account of legal precedents from courts as remote as European Court and the Zimbabwe Supreme Court. It would

AMERICANS ARE UNDER **NO MORAL OBLIGATION TO ACCEPT ANYONE WHO WISHES TO IMMIGRATE ON THE SPURIOUS GROUNDS THAT EVERYONE IS ESSENTIALLY AN IMMIGRANT.**

essence of America’s culture—but it is too abstract and theoretical to provide a fulfilling patriotism on its own. Men sacrifice themselves for home and beauty, for the comradeship of battle, for loyalty to the flag, to ensure that experience of a free life is not lost to their children—they are very unlikely to sacrifice themselves for political ideas unless they also convey this range of loyalties.

Nor does the Creed sufficiently distinguish Americans from people in other countries. If belief in liberty and individual rights were sufficient to make one an American, half the people in the world could claim citizenship. And if the Creed is seriously taken to be the totality of American identity, then the way is open for a multiculturalism that treats the English language, U.S. history, and American cultural practices from baseball to hard work as simply one set of options in a cultural and ethnic smorgasbord—a smorgasbord, moreover, in which preference for traditional American beliefs and customs counts as discrimination. Of course, words and ideas take a goodly portion of their meaning from the surrounding culture—so that our current understanding of such concepts as liberty would be significantly altered if we were to interpret them in the light not of “Anglo-Protestantism” but of Hispanic, Confucian, or Islamic

be a curious irony if the Zimbabwe Supreme Court ended up exercising more legal influence in the U.S. than it does in Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe. But if this is alarmism, it may perhaps be early-warning alarmism.

What has aroused most disquiet among otherwise receptive readers, however, is Huntington’s claim that America’s common culture to which later immigrants assimilated is one of “Anglo-Protestant conformity.” Interestingly, this is one of his less controversial arguments among cultural historians, who have long acknowledged the role of dissenting British religious groups in the shaping of America. Recent major social and cultural histories, such as *Albion’s Seed* by David Hackett Fischer, suggest that, if anything, this influence was even stronger than traditionally understood. It may soothe affronted Catholics to learn that this influence was not, strictly speaking, a matter of religious belief, but rather a set of social practices that encouraged freedom of belief in the first instance, and following on from that other sorts of freedom under a dispersed social and economic leadership. As the Anglo-American religious sociologist David Martin has observed of the modern revival of evangelical Protestantism in Latin America in *Tongues of Fire*, dissenting sects brought to the fore a hitherto “buried intelligentsia”

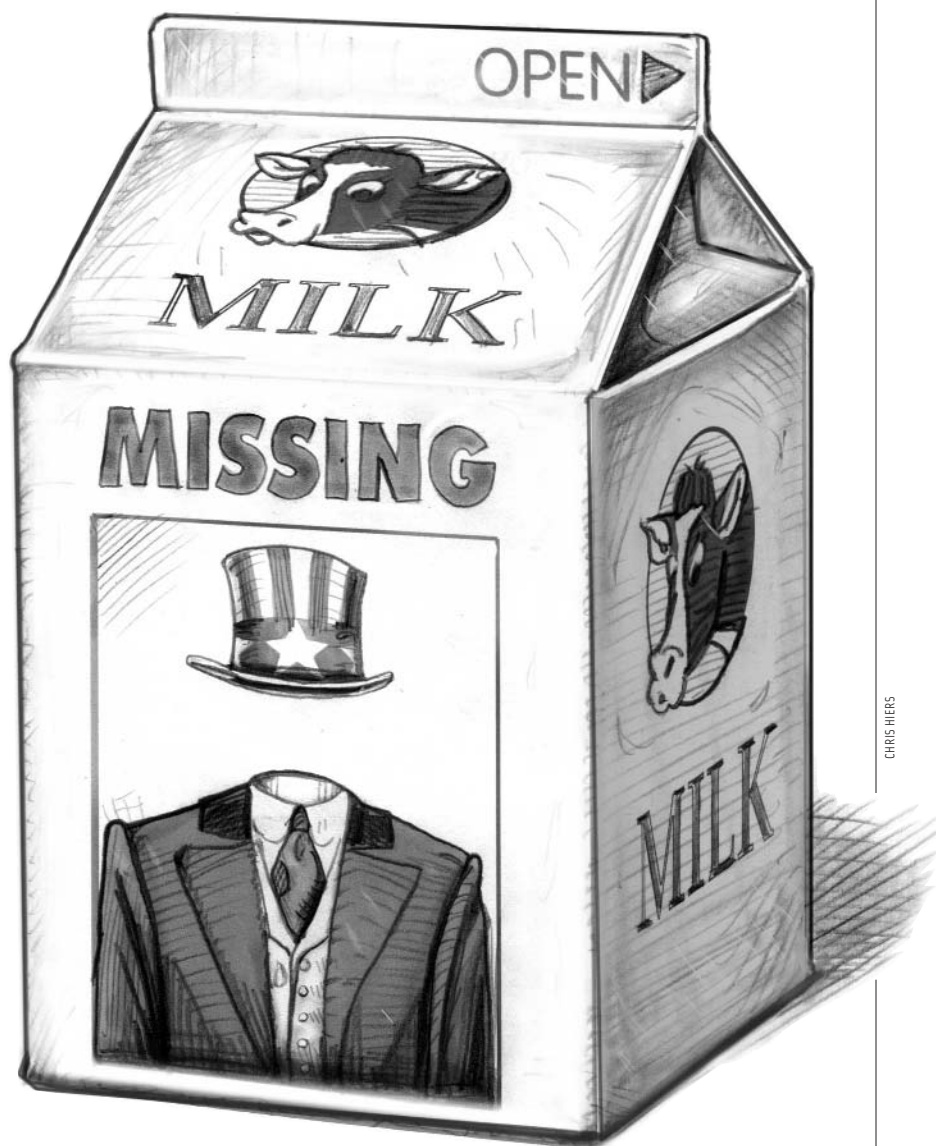
that in turn took the leadership of their communities in non-religious roles. Plainly this had effects in strictly religious terms—*inter alia*, the establishment of a still flourishing “marketplace of religions” in the U.S., the conversion of the Catholic Church in America to Protestant notions of liberty, and the gradual adoption by Rome of these “Americanist” heresies. Most devout American Catholics today are Protestants in political theory. But the main effect in the colonial period and the early years of the Republic was to instill in Americans the habits of self-reliance and voluntary co-operation that so impressed Tocqueville on his visit. And the vital, successful political culture built on these foundations—Anglo-Protestantism, the American Creed, and the rest—was still clearly traceable to its early origins in the 1960s.

It was at this point, circa 1965—or just after the Civil Rights Act had finally brought black America fully within the ambit of the American political nation—that influential Americans set about systematically demolishing this impressive structure. Huntington lists the accomplishments of “the deconstructionists” in the following paragraph:

The deconstructionists promoted programs to enhance the status and influence of subnational, racial, ethnic and cultural groups. They encouraged immigrants to maintain their birth country cultures, granted them legal privileges denied to native-born Americans, and denounced the idea of Americanization as un-American. They pushed the re-writing of history syllabi and textbooks so as to refer to the “peoples” of the United States in place of the single people of the Constitution. They urged supplementing or substituting for national history the history of subnational groups. They downgraded the cen-

trality of English in American life and pushed bilingual education and linguistic diversity. They advocated legal recognition of group rights and racial preferences over the individual rights central to the American Creed. They justified their actions by theories of multiculturalism and the idea that diversity rather than unity or community should be America’s overriding value. The combined effect of these efforts was to promote the deconstruction of the American identity that had been gradually created over three centuries and the ascendance of subnational identities.

On every point listed here, Huntington examines in detail how these changes occurred and what their significance is to America’s future. He pulls not a single punch. To take just one example, he makes clear that the replacement of individual rights by group rights amounts to a “counter-revolution” that reintroduced racial discrimination into American law and practice, implied that individuals are defined by blood, undermined equal justice and equal citizenship, and ultimately denied the existence of a common good. And by the time he has performed the same surgery on the challenge to the English language, the undermining of the common



CHRIS WIERS

culture, the discrediting of assimilation, the erosion of American citizenship, and much else, he has in effect mounted a comprehensive attack on the main social policies of the last 40 years.

The scale and boldness of Huntington's assault appears to have unmanned reviewers of his book. It seems at times as if they can hardly believe that one author is taking on so many social pieties simultaneously. *Who Are We?* is a veritable abattoir of sacred cows. And the reviewers reacted by looking nervously away, by failing to grasp the main point, and by taking refuge in minor and trivial critiques.

Thus, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Alan Wolfe disputed Huntington's historical account thus:

It is ... incorrect to claim that American identity was shaped by dissenting Anglo-Protestantism. Two of the churches prominent at the United States's founding were established rather than dissenting: the Church of England became the established church of Virginia under the Episcopal name, and Presbyterianism had been established in Scotland.

Really, this is the kind of thing that gives nit-picking a bad name.

Or here is Louis Menand in the *New Yorker*:

... it is absurd to say that [multiculturalism] is anti-Western. Its roots, as Charles Taylor and many other writers have shown, are in the classic texts of Western literature and philosophy.

Has Menand never heard of Marx? The German social philosopher is undoubtedly a major figure in the Western tradition of literature and philosophy—few more so. Yet there is no doubt either that his major works are anti-Western. They seek to undermine West-

ern society and to replace it with something fundamentally different—and from all the evidence of experiments in Marxism, something a great deal worse. If it finally succeeds in replacing America's traditional national identity, multiculturalism seems likely to be a great deal worse too.

TO LOVE SOMETHING BECAUSE IT IS **FAMILIAR AND ONE'S OWN** IS, IN FACT, A **PERFECTLY RESPECTABLE REASON** FOR LOVING IT.

Menand is nearer the mark when he observes that *Who Are We?* is a work of identity politics and that for Huntington “the chief reason—it could even be the only reason—for Americans to embrace their culture is that it is the culture that happens to be theirs.” That is not strictly true. Both Huntington and Americans in general can give other good reasons for thinking their culture admirable—and Huntington does so at intervals throughout the book. Given that American culture, like Western culture in general, is a self-conscious culture of critique, it could hardly be otherwise. But to love something because it is familiar and one's own is, in fact, a perfectly respectable reason for loving it. Many good daughters love fathers who are thoroughly dislikeable by any objective standard—and the world is a better and more stable place for it. Huntington even quotes the Copenhagen School to the effect that people want “societal security” almost as much as they want “national security.” In other words, they want a society “to persist in its essential character” and to sustain “within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture, association, and religious and national identity and custom.” If these are all removed or destroyed, then anomie, despair, and disintegration tend to be

among the consequences. Why should Americans not be protected against them?

The answer, as it emerges in this controversy, is twofold. The first reason is consequential: there are trade-offs. If some people are contented living in a society made in their own image, then

others—namely, minorities of one kind or another—are likely to feel out of place. A sentimental reluctance to make minorities feel like outsiders, even if that means discomfiting the American majority, is one of the major factors driving the critical hostility to Huntington. Huntington himself has the courage to say straightforwardly that if people have minority opinions or minority tastes, then they will to that extent be outsiders—and cannot reasonably expect the majority to conceal or suppress its loyalties in order to make them feel at home. He makes this argument both in relation to atheists who want American Christians to surrender all public expression of their religion and in relation to immigrants who want society to be re-ordered to make the English language and American institutions merely one set of cultural options. And he does so because, in the end, he thinks that solidarity—or “societal security”—is essential to the wellbeing of American society as a whole, including in time the wellbeing of the minorities.

If Huntington's argument is designed to prefer the interests of the American majority, however, why is it at bay rather than triumphant? Here the second sociological reason comes into play: America's elites—both the corporate elites of the Right and the academic elites

of the Left—do not share the opinions and tastes of the American people. Both elites have been, in effect, “de-nationalized” by the processes of economic and cultural globalization. They are more likely to share the tastes and opinions of their counterparts in other countries than those of their own countrymen in provincial and small-town America. They regard patriotism and national feeling as atavistic emotions that retard both economic rationality (in the case of the Right) and cosmopolitan ideologies of “democratic humanism” (in the case of the Left). And they see America not as a nation like other nations, if more powerful, but as the embryo either of the global market or of a new “universal nation” without boundaries or restrictive citizenship. As a result, on a whole range of policy issues—racial preferences, bilingual education, military intervention abroad, open borders—the American people are firmly on one side and the American elites are on the other. This tends to produce cynicism about government and electoral abstention, punctuated by rebellious referendum initiatives such as Propositions 187 and 209 in which the voters briefly impose their will on the elites. Even then elitists in the courts frequently declare the people’s victories to be unconstitutional.

This is an unstable situation, and the elites are well aware of the fact. Hence their usual reluctance to join debate on the kind of issues raised by Huntington’s book. But the extremes of both elites—libertarians on the Right and multiculturalists on the Left—cannot restrain themselves. Their solution, as illustrated in the early reactions to Huntington’s *Foreign Policy* piece, is to treat anyone who departs from the official orthodoxies on these matters as a heretic to be shamed, scarred, and effectively silenced. Huntington, fortunately, is too eminent to be crushed in that way.

So *Who Are We?* is worth ten divisions in the new American culture war about patriotism. It demystifies every radical argument employed to deconstruct the American nation and the customs, habits, and traditions that sustain it. Even more usefully, it demonstrates that some conservatives and neoconservatives are unwitting accomplices in this demolition. They are misled in this direction either because of their attachment to outworn ideological definitions of America—formulae that once served a useful role in smoothing assimilation but that now act as carriers for multiculturalism—or because they have the false patriotic belief that America is not a nation with its own character but the entire world in embryo and so capable of indefinite expansion. Above all, perhaps, by attracting the kind of denunciations that reveal a deep animus towards the United States in the attackers, Huntington’s book has revealed that there is a

substantial anti-American intelligentsia (and *lumpen-intelligentsia*) within the American nation committed to a sort of “counter-tribalism.” These are the patriots of an America that does not exist—the America of multiculturalism, bilingualism, and diversity that, in President Clinton’s words, “can live without a dominant European culture.” They therefore hate the America that does exist as an obstacle to their dreams. And they tend to sympathize with attacks upon it—and to react against anyone who defends it.

In acting as a sort of lure to draw the various tribes of “counter-tribalists” from their academic and corporate lairs into the open, Huntington has performed an important intellectual service. After *The Clash of Civilizations* and *Who Are We?* perhaps his next book should be *The Anatomy of Counter-Tribalism*. ■

John O’Sullivan is editor-in-chief of the National Interest.

Any Day Now

For the laptop bombadiers, victory is always just around the corner.

By W. James Antle III

AS THE DATE for transferring sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government approaches, commentators who back the war are once again trying to rally support by putting forth hopeful forecasts of victory. William Safire chastised “dovish defeatists” and characterized Iraq as “lurching toward a democratic decision,” while Clifford May sought to reassure readers that America is engaged in “a justifiable, necessary and winnable war.”

Not long ago, some hawks appeared to be reappraising the war effort. Before the invasion, George Will argued that Colin Powell’s fateful WMD presentation to the United Nations “will change all minds open to evidence” and wrote that war might be less costly in terms of human lives than containment. More recently he has cast a critical eye upon democratic nation-building and chided the Bush administration for its lack of

“conservatism without the prefix” in assessing the situation in Iraq. In an editorial for the May 3 issue, the strongly pro-war *National Review* criticized the White House’s “dismaying capacity to believe its own public relations” and conceded, “as we have seen in Iraq, the world isn’t as malleable as some Wilsonians would have it.”

Yet a greater number of pro-invasion commentators seem to be making their case with renewed confidence, compiling lists of “what’s going right in Iraq” and dusting off old allegations of links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. They might be more persuasive if advocates of the Iraq War had not been excessively optimistic from the beginning, leading them to make a multitude of inaccurate predictions. The writers and intellectuals in favor of this war have repeatedly understated the level of

Iraqi opposition to a prolonged period of U.S. rule and overstated the prospects for building a functional democracy. Tony Blankley, for example, wrote after Baghdad fell, “Iraqis just keep going to bed and getting up as, seamlessly, democracy emerges.”

When the death toll of our forces continued to climb and vast swaths of Iraq remained ungovernable for months after Hussein was ousted and major combat operations were declared to be over, pro-war pundits began to look for other developments that would allow them to claim victory. The first such “turning point” said to signify that victory was just around the corner was the killing of Hussein’s sons Qusay and Uday.

Duane Freese, writing in *Tech Central Station*, called the killings President Bush’s “Antietam moment.” Cal Thomas wrote in his syndicated column at the time, “it seems critics of the Bush administration are being set up for a mighty fall.” He went on to argue that those who had claimed that the “post-war situation is going badly and the administration had no post-war plans” would have to “eat a lot of crow.”

“Now that Uday and Qusay are identified as having died in the well-coordinated attack in Mosul,” Thomas wrote hopefully, “and if Saddam himself is taken dead or alive, if celebrating occurs in the streets, and if something like self-rule is slowly established in Iraq.” That’s quite a lot of “ifs.” Unfortunately, not much changed after the Hussein brothers were killed, and it did not bring us any closer to anything like stable self-government in Iraq.

“The extinction of the future of the Saddam regime will dishearten the Baathist thugs who have been hired to fight on,” David Frum contended. “It’s significant that Uday and Qusay seem to have been sold out by a member of their inner circle, who decided to place more

credence in the rewards offered by the Americans than the threats of the Baathists. And wisely so.”

Yet violent resistance to the U.S. presence in Iraq continued despite such predictions. Perhaps this is because more than a few Baathist dead-enders objected to the occupation, but this possibility had no impact on the analysis offered by commentators in the pro-war camp.

Andrew Sullivan complained that the *New York Times* was still characterizing “the contract killings and Baathist remnants’ murders of small numbers of U.S. soldiers as ‘an uprising.’” It also refers to the American and British presence in Iraq as an ‘occupation.’” By Sullivan’s reckoning, 800 U.S. troops dead at this writing constitutes “small numbers,” the current resistance is not an uprising, and the presence of U.S. and British troops as the coalition runs the country is not an occupation.

Others suggested that such setbacks are in effect natural. “The process of birthing—if you will—a democracy among a people who never have lived under one is proving to be as messy as one might expect,” Rebecca Hagelin cheerfully observed in her Townhall.com column.

When the deaths of Qusay and Uday failed to prove a real turning point in the war, supporters of the invasion began to look for a new one. They found it when Saddam Hussein was captured in December. Mackubin Thomas Owens conceded that the attacks against our troops and allies would continue, but predicted, “Baath-party dead-enders will probably lose hope, as loyalists in the Romanian *Securitate* did” after Nicolae Ceaucescu’s death. “Resistance ended after the dictator and his wife were executed and their bullet-riddled bodies were shown on television.”

Pictures of a scruffy Saddam being poked by U.S. military doctors and checked for lice were broadcast all over

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the world. Yet six months later, resistance continued. Some of the deadliest months of the invasion occurred while Hussein was safely in U.S. custody.

Charles Krauthammer nevertheless predicted, "...with Saddam captured [Iraq] has turned a historic corner and may be on its way to establishing the first pluralistic, representative pro-Western Arab polity in the region." Months later, we continue to wait in vain for any signs that this might actually happen. The *Boston Herald* editorialized that catching the erstwhile dictator made "the task of building a democracy in Iraq not merely possible, but inevitable." Cal Thomas once again insisted, "The critics—political and journalistic—who said the administration's efforts were failing have been proved wrong." He further claimed that Saddam's capture "could be the ultimate triumph of the Bush administration's policy of preemption."

One would think that after alleged turning points in the war that have failed to translate into a clear victory, speculation about weapons threats that have failed to be verified, and a series of predictions that have failed to materialize, some pro-war pundits would be more cautious and maybe even a little embarrassed. Yet they press ahead, predicting that the June 30 handover will be the next "turning point." "This has all the makings of 'Mission Accomplished II,'" Mickey Kaus recently wrote in *Slate*. "The June 30 transfer will be 'accomplished,' but none of the essentials will change." Other hawks continue to advocate a wider war. As late as April, Jed Babbin was arguing that to win in Iraq, "we have to end the regimes of Syria and Iran."

Yet the reality on the ground in Iraq continues to defy the persistent optimism of those who wish to reshape the Middle East. Maybe before we heed pundits' projections for the next war, we should look at how often they have been right about the one we are in now. ■

A Time for Reckoning

Ten lessons to take away from Iraq

By Andrew J. Bacevich

REALITY HAS NOT dealt kindly with the hopes and expectations conjured up to justify Operation Iraqi Freedom. Although the war may not be lost, it cannot be won, at least not as the Bush administration once defined winning. What then are we to make of this experience?

The question may strike some as premature. Whether President Bush (or President Kerry) "stays the course" or cuts American losses, difficult days lie ahead. The bill yet to be levied for this misadventure promises to be steep. More Americans and even larger numbers of Iraqis will lose their lives. Combat operations and the black hole of "nation-building" will consume additional billions of dollars, adding to the ocean of red ink that is the federal budget. Yet even as events wind their way toward what promises to be a deeply unsatisfactory denouement, the argument over what it all means must necessarily be joined. Common sense dictates that we apply to future U.S. policy what we have learned in Iraq, and the future will not wait.

With an eye toward that future—and with no claim that any of what follows qualifies as definitive—herewith a first cut at identifying the war's operative lessons.

First, ideology makes a poor substitute for strategy. With the invasion of Iraq, it became impossible to deny that in the heady aftermath of the Cold War American grand strategy became uncoupled from reality. Certain that

history had spoken and that Americans were uniquely able to interpret its meaning, policymakers both Democratic and Republican uncorked old vials of Wilsonian illusion and breathed deeply. As a consequence, zealotry supplanted calculations of power and interest as a determinant of U.S. policy.

Bill Clinton entertained visions of globalization, creating a world without borders in which all nations would be sure to enjoy the blessings of peace, prosperity, and democracy. George W. Bush topped Clinton, vowing after 9/11 not only to eliminate terror (an impossibility) but also to put an end to evil. But mixing utopianism and politics is a recipe for miscalculation and an invitation to strategic bankruptcy—as the Iraq War has painfully reminded us.

It is the tradition of George Washington rather than the tradition of Woodrow Wilson that best serves American interests. The nation's first president—and successors like Lincoln, both Roosevelts, Truman, and Eisenhower—understood not only the uses but also the limits of power. That balanced sensibility, anchored to considerations of prudence, has vanished from the current foreign-policy elite. There is an urgent need to restore it.

Second, wars leave loose ends. In a political sense, decisive victory—meaning military success that makes a clean sweep of the complaints giving rise to war in the first place—is a pipe dream.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was supposed to finish the job that Bush's father

had left undone in 1991. Oust Saddam Hussein, the war's supporters promised, and all sorts of good things were sure to follow. War would transform Iraq into the first Arab democracy, usher the Middle East into an era of lasting peace, and nudge Islam toward moderation and modernity. Today, the Ba'athist regime is gone, but none of the predicted benefits seems likely to materialize. Instead the United States has exchanged the limited burdens of containment for the far more onerous burdens of occupation. We have overthrown a tin-pot dictator posing no immediate threat to the United States and thereby energized and encouraged far more dangerous enemies. Rather than persuading Muslims to see America as liberator and friend, we have cemented our image as Great Satan.

War is like a highly toxic drug: with the cure come side effects. And Iraq reminds us that the side effects can prove worse than the disease.

Third, allies have choices—and will exercise them. Across a decade of hyping the United States as “sole superpower” and “indispensable nation,” too many policymakers persuaded themselves that America's traditional allies

Iraq demolished such fantasies. Allies are not vassals. When interests diverge sufficiently, “friendship” counts for little. The Iraq experience has, time and again, affirmed this fundamental principle: when “old Europe” chose to sit out the war altogether; when Turkey rejected Washington's request to allow U.S. troops to cross its territory; when Spanish voters concluded that occupying Iraq was exacerbating rather than reducing the threat of terror. At every step of the way, as key allies stiffed us, the costs borne by the United States have necessarily risen.

Even before Iraq, the bonds that once joined what was called “the West” had already (and perhaps inevitably) begun to fray. Thanks to its insistence on preventive war, the Bush administration has hastened the West along the path toward oblivion. Nations whose support we once assumed to be a given now question the acceptability of the *Pax Americana* and may yet muster the collective will to proffer an alternative. Before launching on more crusades, we have diplomatic fences to mend.

Fourth, Israel's war is not our war. President Bush's undifferentiated “global war on terror” has encouraged the government of Ariel Sharon to assert that

Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian dispute will not itself alleviate Muslim antagonism toward the United States. But absent such a resolution, that antagonism will fester, thereby providing fertile ground for Osama bin Laden and other Islamic radicals to enlist new recruits.

We should not deceive ourselves about the prospects of bringing real peace to the Holy Land. Something like partition is probably the best outcome one can hope for. But brokering and if necessary enforcing such a partition rather than vainly attempting to democratize the Arab world at the point of a sword ought to form the centerpiece of U.S. policy in the Middle East. Further deference to Israeli hardliners like Sharon, who know nothing but force, is contrary to American interests. True friends of the Jewish state will see it as contrary to Israel's interests as well.

Fifth, “shock and awe” gets you only so far. More than a decade ago, the previous U.S. war against Iraq brought to full flower the American romance with high-tech warfare. Operation Iraqi Freedom has offered the fullest illustration to date of what this new American way of war can and cannot do. On the one hand, it affirmed what we already learned in Desert Storm: U.S. forces will make short work of any conventionally organized and equipped adversary foolish enough to put up a fight.

On the other hand, developments since the fall of Baghdad have also affirmed what we learned in Mogadishu: against a determined insurgent armed with even primitive weapons, air power, stealth, and precision weapons—all the signature capabilities that distinguish the preferred American style of warfare—won't do the trick. Defeating guerrillas requires something more and something different. The United States military is no closer today to devising a technological solution to the riddle of

THE UNITED STATES HAS EXCHANGED THE **LIMITED BURDENS OF CONTAINMENT** FOR THE FAR MORE **ONEROUS BURDENS OF OCCUPATION.**

had no alternative but to accede to U.S. “global leadership.” Both the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991 and the Kosovo conflict of 1999 seemed to show that when Washington called, others clamored to board the bandwagon. To opt out was to be left out and left behind: from Washington's perspective, this was a risk that few “friends” were likely to take.

Israel's enemies and America's enemies are one and the same. But they are not. Indeed, Sharon's misguided effort to crush resistance to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza through brute force serves only to complicate and exacerbate our own problems. Sharon's policy will not work, and as Israel's chief supporter we get tagged with much of the blame.

unconventional war than it was when Vietnam ended in defeat.

Sixth, the margin of U.S. military supremacy is thinner than advertised. Ours is undoubtedly the mightiest military the world has ever seen, with a more than ample inventory of high-performance fighter jets, aircraft carriers, and top-of-the-line nuclear submarines. But our inventory of soldiers and Marines is grossly inadequate—inadequate at least to implement President Bush's grandiose plans for sprinkling the blessings of liberty throughout the Greater Middle East. Despite the administration's obdurate insistence to the contrary, the fact is that the United States today has too few soldiers doing too many things.

In just one year, the Iraq morass has brought U.S. ground forces within a hair's breadth of overstretch. Expedients such as relying on reserves and hiring thousands of mercenaries have not fixed the problem; they embody it. Announced plans to divert troops from Korea to Iraq and to deploy stateside training cadres show just how bare the cupboard has become.

If the United States is intent on playing the role of global hegemon, we need to put more young Americans in uniform—lots more. If as citizens we're not willing to pay that price, then the Iraq experience should oblige policymakers to scale back their ambitions.

Seventh, the myth of American casualty aversion is just that. The conventional wisdom of the 1990s was that a risk-averse military and a casualty-phobic public constituted major obstacles impeding the effective use of force. For the Clinton administration and its defenders, this became a convenient device for offloading onto others responsibility for American military fecklessness. The onus for the pseudo-campaigns of the decade leading up to 9/11—the zenith coming in 1998 when

U.S. Navy cruise missiles demolished an empty pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum—lay not with the commander-in-chief but with foot-dragging generals and fainthearted citizens who lacked the stomach for serious military action.

Historians can debate whether or not the sensitivity to casualties was ever as great as it once appeared. But there is

AMERICAN FORCES IN IRAQ HAVE FOR **MORE THAN A YEAR** BEEN ENGAGED IN A **FULL-FLEDGED SHOOTING WAR** AND STILL **DO NOT KNOW WHOM THEY ARE FIGHTING.**

little room for debate that the events of Sept. 11, 2001 swept aside any such constraints. Traditional American ferocity and bloody-mindedness reasserted themselves with a vengeance. All that was needed was competence at the top to harness and direct it. But as the Iraq debacle has made plain, competence remains, as it was in the 1990s, in precariously short supply.

Eighth, so too with the myth of an American genius for spreading democracy. From the very day that U.S. forces entered Baghdad, the officials charged with raising a new Iraq out of the ashes of the old have displayed remarkable ineptitude. However admirable the hard work of those who have risked life and limb to give the Iraqi people a fresh start, the overall effort has misfired.

Far from replicating the success achieved in postwar Germany and Japan after 1945, L. Paul Bremer has managed to reprise the sorry record achieved in places like South Vietnam. If the United States insists that it needs to be in the nation-building business, then it's time to go back to square one, drawing on the disappointments of Iraq to devise the techniques, create the institutions, and develop the leaders to do better next

time out. Or, perhaps more wisely, we might conclude that bringing democracy to the Arab world is akin to making bricks without straw—a trick best left to others.

Ninth, it's hard to win when you don't know whom you're fighting. Much has been made about the blunders in strategic intelligence such as the fail-

ure to anticipate 9/11 and the bogus assertions regarding Saddam's weapons of massive destruction. But the inadequacies of tactical intelligence have been at least as great, if not greater.

In a situation truly without precedent in all of American military history, American forces in Iraq have for more than a year been engaged in a full-fledged shooting war and still do not know whom they are fighting. The reliance on generic terms to describe the "terrorists," "insurgents," or "foreign fighters" tells the story. Exactly who is the enemy? How is he organized? Who gives the orders? What are his aims? We don't know. And as long as we don't, the enemy will retain the initiative.

In short, the Iraq War shows that the imperative of intelligence reform goes far beyond any problems attributed to the CIA.

Tenth, civil-military relations at the top are broken. The Iraq War has confirmed what had already become evident during the 1990s: the relationship between senior military leaders and the top echelon of civilian officials is dysfunctional. That dysfunction contributes to flawed decisions on crucial issues related to peace and war.

During the Clinton era, the problem was one of a weak commander-in-chief unable or unwilling to assert effective control over the generals. Donald Rumsfeld came into office intent on clearing up any confusion about who is in charge. But the Rumsfeld approach is to treat his principal military advisers with McNamara-like disdain. Those who speak up—like the Army chief of staff who had the temerity to suggest that occupying Iraq might require a considerable number of troops—are rebuked and marginalized.

The point is not to suggest turning war over to the soldiers. Unambiguous civilian control is essential. But effective civil-military interaction demands something more than simply throttling generals. It means incorporating professional military expertise into the debate over basic national security policy. That in turn requires a combination of trust, honesty, mutual respect, and mutual self-restraint that has been absent for many years. This is an intolerable situation that in all likelihood the Department of Defense itself cannot fix. It cries out for serious and sustained congressional attention.

As was the case with Vietnam, the debate over the lessons of Iraq promises to be a protracted one. Again as was the case with Vietnam, the temptation to exploit that debate for partisan purposes will be great. But the issue is too important to use as an excuse for bashing neoconservatives, scoring points against President Bush, or luxuriating in the peculiar satisfactions of *Schadenfreude*. To avoid repeating the errors that got us into this mess, we need to get those lessons right. ■

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Rainbow Republic

Mandela and the cult of utopian South Africa

By Peter Hitchens

THE GLOBAL LEFT, who loathe normal patriotism, have always needed a country that they can admire and defend, a fatherland whose flag they can revere and whose anthem they can sing. Proper love of country allows—and sometimes demands—severe criticism of one's own nation. But the Left's idealized version is not like this. They actively suppress doubt and are angered by the slightest criticism. Examine now the wide-eyed drivings of the fellow travelers of Stalin's USSR or Mao's China and see how the most intelligent people can persuade themselves of the stupidest things when they think this serves a higher cause than truth.

For many years after the exposure of the truth about these iron tyrannies, the Left had no utopia to admire. That vacancy has been quietly filled by the Republic of South Africa, a nascent one-party state with severe economic and social problems, while a bizarre personality cult has been created around the flawed and—to his credit—rather embarrassed figure of Nelson Mandela.

The peoples of the various paradises of the past have—infuriatingly for their fellow travelers—exposed and condemned the historic lies more fiercely than outsiders could ever have done. Modern Russia and China may still be squalid authoritarian slums, one a police state and the other fast becoming one. But they long ago smashed the idols foreign admirers worshipped, revealing their allegedly great and supposedly

benevolent leaders as depraved monsters. It is even quite fashionable now, in the Western publishing industry that used to dislike and reject criticisms of the USSR, to issue endless condemnatory biographies of Stalin and critical histories of his repressions.

Never let it be said that the Left have learned nothing from their failures. They understand that the Soviet experiment was the wrong route to the new world that radicals desire. But by abandoning the route, they have not abandoned the goal. Leninism is finished. A new road to utopia, using the tools of cultural revolution, is being built. And with its gentle curves and slopes rather than the perilous precipices and rickety bridges of Bolshevism, it is proving a far more satisfactory and irreversible way of reaching the cherished objective. Multiculturalism, globalism, liberal imperialism, and supranational institutions, even neoconservatism, gnaw away at the walls of the nation-state. Political correctness politely eats away at marriage, religion, common sense, law, and tradition. Third-way economics increases the power of the state over the economy—and so over the individual—without the clumsiness and failure of nationalization.

And this, I suspect, explains the strange adulation now directed towards Nelson Mandela and the heavy political and cultural defenses erected round the new South Africa. This unique nation stands in the minds of the Left as a symbol of so many of their hopes and objectives that

they have adopted it as a second fatherland. Do not try burning this flag or mocking this anthem.

I was recently asked by Britain's Channel Four TV to be part of a program critical of Mandela, a creditable piece of boldness by a network anxious to regain a fading reputation as a home for dissent. As a conservative outsider, I am not normally asked to participate in programs on British TV, and I have good reason to believe that I only got the job because nobody else would do it. I had no credit to lose with my country's cultural establishment. The cult of Mandela is strong, and the desire to believe that the new South Africa is a multicultural paradise is extraordinarily potent. Almost everything written or broadcast about this man and this subject is friendly and admiring. You might have thought that one hour of skepticism was not too much to bear, but the South African government was demanding "balance" even before it was transmitted. Friends of that government in Britain have since written to the TV station to denounce me. One of Johannesburg's major newspapers has published an article assailing me. And, though the program is unlikely ever to be shown in South Africa itself, I have been the target of a strong personal attack from no less than the republic's president, Thabo Mbeki.

My offense was to suggest that the new "Rainbow Nation" is seriously imperfect and that Mandela himself has some responsibility for this, having been president for five years and a great moral authority for ten. Commentators who go to Mbeki's country are supposed to rejoice that there has been no civil war following the collapse of apartheid, to praise the harmony among the races, the "freest constitution in the world," the "vibrant democracy." They are expected to compliment the country on its general efficiency (by African standards) and apparent economic success.

Most do, and tourists who visit the show city of Cape Town and go on to view the wildlife could easily come away with such an impression, if they did not look too hard.

But it is false. There was never any real reason for there to be a civil war once the white minority had agreed—under Western pressure—to give up power without using their efficient and potent state machine to make a violent last stand that could easily have lasted for years. Mandela deserves praise—and has received it in plenty—for his forbearance towards his former foes. But those foes too deserve praise for having done the wise thing. And it is worth remembering that South Africa could have found harmony long before if only its principal black movement, Mandela's African National Congress (ANC), had not been closely allied with the Soviet Union. As long as the Cold War lasted, the U.S. and Western Europe would have opposed the handover of this strategically important nation to an organization with such a dismal pro-Kremlin record. Once the Cold War was over, it was the pressure of the banks and of cynical Western leaders that brought Mandela out of jail and into office. Capitalism allied itself to cultural conservatism during the Cold War

exercised freely, especially the consciences of those with a soft spot for Communism. In apartheid South Africa, the Communist Party was for once not guarding the prison camps. Its members were in them. The security police were not loyal Communist apparatchiks. They were interrogating loyal Communists instead. Here was a socially, politically, and culturally conservative state resorting to the secret police methods, torture, and censorship more familiar in the lands of Marxism-Leninism. It was a sort of answer to their conservative critics, who taunted them for their equivocal view of the Communist world. "Your side does these things too," they could quite justly point out, while lining themselves up piously against the undoubted wickedness of apartheid itself—as if they were the only ones who were against racial prejudice. To this day, anyone who criticizes them tends to be accused of yearning for a return to the days of pass laws and racial classification.

When the old regime fell, the history of South Africa pretty much ended for radicals round the world. Now that the ANC had won a more or less free election and Mandela had completed his journey from prison cell to presidential office, South Africa became a country of the mind, the utopia of the New Left, and

SOUTH AFRICA BECAME A COUNTRY OF THE MIND, THE UTOPIA OF THE NEW LEFT, AND MANDELA ACHIEVED A STRANGE SECULAR SAINTHOOD.

because of the Soviet threat. But with that menace out of the way, capitalism was only too happy to turn progressive, and what better way of demonstrating this than to embrace the Rainbow Nation?

Up to that point, South Africa had been a playground where the consciences of world liberalism could be

Mandela achieved a strange secular sainthood. Others have suffered for liberty and justice, some without ever supporting violence. One thinks of Andrei Sakharov and Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Vaclav Havel. None of these has achieved the canonization granted to Mandela. Visitors to his former prison at Robben Island can purchase ghastly

souvenirs of the place, from cufflinks to baseball caps, and even a nauseating children's picture-book lauding the great leader.

Yet Mandela is very far from faultless. He has given wholly needless and excessive praise to the repressive monsters Fidel Castro and Muammar Gadhafi, an odd thing for a former political prisoner to do. In 1997, he delivered a shocking speech denouncing any opposition to his beloved ANC as illegitimate. The ANC itself, for which he continues to raise funds, has sought larger and larger majorities in Parliament, directing special efforts against any serious black rivals. It now has almost 70 percent of the seats, enabling it legally to amend most of the Constitution. If it achieves 75 percent, no clause is safe. Deputy President Jacob Zuma recently declared that the ANC would remain in power till the second coming of Christ. The Constitution, full of high-minded rhetoric, is in any case short of the terse clear limits on government power that are the real tests of such a

Repression in the new South Africa requires a creepy, apparently voluntary acceptance that this is not the time for dissent. In the same way, press and media seem reluctant to exercise the free speech officially granted to them. The observant visitor, who reads the papers and watches the TV news, gets a sense that reality is muffled by self-censorship and a desire not to upset the new consensus. When I visited Helen Suzman, once the lone anti-apartheid MP in the former white-dominated Parliament, she complained about the way she and her fellow liberals have been airbrushed from official history, barely featuring in the grandiose but disappointing Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, which is mainly about the courage of the ANC. I was astonished when she told me she had been treated better by the repressive crocodiles of the old white National Party than today's liberal opposition are treated by the ANC.

I was even more astonished when Genevieve, an old lady in the black township of Soweto, said unprompted that

country. It also deters investment, as do the strict and oppressive employment laws. The result is severe unemployment, now standing at 40 percent.

These facts do not match the Left's fantasy of what South Africa ought to be. Nor do the enormous, crime-infested shantytowns, which grow much faster than the government can build new housing in the original townships. Nor does the treatment of illegal immigrants from the rest of Africa, rounded up into grim camps and sent back across the border in their thousands in special trains. Officially, these men and women are African brothers. In fact, they are deeply unwelcome, especially at this time of poverty, crime, and high unemployment.

The Left's illusions are also badly upset by the immense and fishy arms purchases begun under Nelson Mandela, including the buying of submarines for which the country has no possible use. The deal, worth \$6 billion, has resulted in serious suspicions of corruption but only one minor figure has been convicted in connection with it and even he has yet to go to jail. Patricia de Lille, an independent black MP who attacked the deal in Parliament, says that she received death threats as a result. And then of course there are the twin epidemics—of AIDS and uncontrolled crime—that threaten the stability of the present and of the future. Most African experts say that much poorer Uganda has done a far better job of combating AIDS. And it is the black poor who suffer most as a result of these failures. Much fuss is made about crime directed against whites, and there is plenty. But for the most part whites—and rich blacks—have the means to defend themselves: their houses are surrounded by high walls topped with electric fences. Private, rapid-response security squads make up for the lethargic, absent police force. But those in the shantytowns, whose houses can be

I WAS EVEN MORE ASTONISHED WHEN GENEVIEVE, AN OLD LADY IN THE BLACK TOWNSHIP OF SOWETO, SAID UNPROMPTED THAT SHE PREFERRED THE OLD GOVERNMENT TO THE NEW ONE.

document. President Mbeki has already begun grumbling about how the Constitutional Court does not properly represent the views of "the People," i.e., the views of Mr. Mbeki. A Communist MP, Jeremy Cronin, was recently forced into a humiliating recantation after his criticisms of the ANC were made public on an obscure website. The same Jeremy Cronin had courageously stood up against severe psychological torture at the hands of the former regime's security police.

she preferred the old government to the new one. The economist Sampie Terre Blanche, a former apartheid supporter who changed his mind, believes the country is now far more unequal than in the days of white rule, with a top layer of 15 million receiving 85 percent of the national wealth, while the bottom 15 million receive about ten percent. Much of this new top layer is black, thanks to a policy of affirmative action that is superficially attractive but has driven many skilled men and women out of the

kicked in by any villain who chooses to do so, are entirely on their own and often resort to crude vigilante action.

Judged by its own standards, let alone by those of skeptical conservatives, the new South Africa is not a triumph and is a long way from becoming a paradise. The races are still separate in practice apart from a few symbolic changes—some rich blacks meet rich whites in desegregated malls and schools—but there is not true mixing on the scale seen in, say, London. The economy and the education system are blighted by the effects of affirmative action. A mixture of government intolerance and submissive conformism limit freedom of thought. It is difficult to say these things in South Africa, let alone to observe, truthfully, that the supposedly sainted figure of Nelson Mandela is used as a fig leaf to cover up these faults.

I do not know if South Africa can survive as a free and prosperous nation. I hope that it can and think it is a mistake to suggest that it will automatically follow the path taken by its northern neighbor, Zimbabwe. I certainly have no wish to send it back to the old days of apartheid, the invariable allegation made by the country's defenders against such criticism. But far more significant is the way in which it is difficult, unpopular, and professionally risky to voice these doubts abroad. South Africa's fellow travelers fear, with reason, that the truth about this fascinating country will cast doubt on the rightness of the new multicultural ideology that is so important to them and on the politically important sanctification of Mandela as its symbol. If they cared about the actual country of South Africa rather than the non-existent utopia they pretend exists on its soil, they would be more willing to listen to doubt. ■

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Saudi sources are claiming that there is an Iranian buildup of troops on the Iraqi border,

alleging that the movement is part of Iranian preparations to invade Iraq after American troops leave. The pretext for an invasion would be to avoid a security vacuum due to the departure of U.S. and coalition troops coupled with the inability of Iraqi security forces to control the situation. Independent observers have been unable to confirm the Saudi claims and note that the reports come in the middle of a renewed crisis between Tehran and the UN over Iran's less than ample co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency on its nuclear programs. It is possible that the allegations are disinformation put out deliberately by the Saudi government, possibly as a warning to Iran not to interfere.



The CIA is heading for a showdown with Congress over the upcoming Iraq weapons of mass destruction report.

The 400-page report was given to the CIA prior to release to enable the Agency to restrict information it considered too sensitive for the public. The CIA took nearly six weeks to review the material and asked the Senate Intelligence Committee to restrict access to more than one third of the text. The redactions insisted upon by the CIA could mean that the report may not be released this summer. The Senate now has the option to redraft the text or to override the objections and issue the report as it is. The latter course is unlikely, as it could genuinely damage ongoing intelligence operations. The CIA objections relate to information that could reveal sources and methods being used to collect intelligence, but some Senate critics believe that the Agency went way overboard and may be attempting to gut the report. It has been suggested that some of the redactions relate to criticism of Agency operations and of former Director George Tenet.



The tension between Turkey and Israel is growing over the more than 400 Israeli intelligence officers who are operating in northern Iraq under U.S. protection.

The Israelis are supporting various Kurdish groups in an attempt to pressure Syria and Iran through their Kurdish minorities but are also worrying close ally Turkey, which Israel has long counted on as a friendly bridge to the Islamic world. Turkish Prime Minister Tayep Erdogan has recently criticized Israel for its policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but the real target of the criticism is Kurdistan. Erdogan, addressing the opening session of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) in Istanbul, said that the Israeli military's actions are causing anti-Semitism around the world. The Israeli ambassador in Ankara, alarmed by the warning, has advised the Turkish Foreign Ministry that the Israelis in northern Iraq are only businessmen, but the Turks know that he is lying. Turkey recognizes that ties with Israel guarantee good relations with the White House and Congress, but its concern over the possibility of an independent Kurdish state supported by the United States and Israel is a vital issue that cannot be ignored. ■

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Innocents at Home

I just returned to my home in Mexico after two weeks of hard touring in Bolivia. It was the kind of travel that at my advanced age I should know better than but never

do: flying into grass strips to boat into the endless swamps of the pampas, freezing in unheated shacks in the wild high desert at 12,000 feet, mountain biking down El Camino de la Muerte out of La Paz next to drop-offs of half a mile. Not sensible, perhaps, but few things worth doing are.

Curiously, in South America, our backyard, my traveling-companions-by-chance were virtually never American. There were Brits, Aussies, Kiwis, yes. And German, French, and Dutch folk, but no gringos. They weren't hippies. They ran from 22 to 40: an Irish girl of maybe 26 who had been solo on the road for six months, a Frenchwoman in the wine business in her late 30's on a two-week jaunt, an English financial officer on holiday. Most carried expedition backpacks. They were friendly, gutsy, self-reliant. I liked them.

But there were no Americans.

It is a pattern. Another pattern is that almost all of the Europeans know at least two languages, the English-speaking peoples only one. It isn't just in Bolivia. I live in a region of Mexico (near Guadalajara) that has a large population of American expatriates and retirees. They almost never learn Spanish and do not much mix with the Mexicans. When I covered the American military in Europe years back, the troops never learned German. Some refused to leave the base.

I knew my companions in Bolivia briefly but well. When you spend nights at 20-below in unheated shacks with the wind howling outside, eight in a room in

sleeping bags, an intimacy grows. One crazy night in the swamps, we ran out of beer and the guides took us in boats through the night to a remote bar on stilts where we drank ourselves silly. It was a splendid evening.

But there were no gringos.

The Europeans bicker among themselves a bit. ("What can you expect of a German?" they will ask, or "Everybody knows the Dutch are stingy," but they say it with a smile.) Yet they all know each other's countries. They have been to Morocco, India, Egypt. They have a worldliness about them. It is not an air of snotty superiority. They are simply comfortable abroad.

HOW MANY OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN TO AN IRAQI?

They think Americans are idiots. By and large they aren't offensive and don't (usually) bring the subject up. I am not inclined to defend the indefensible, however, and so discussions emerged. Why, they want to know, do Americans know nothing about the world? I never quite know what to say. Well, er, it's a big country, we don't have to speak other languages, ah, the schools are terrible (why, they ask?), we just aren't very curious or adventurous (why not, they ask?). The observable fact is that Americans display a blank, uninquiring ignorance of other cultures. Our current president is a prime example.

What effect does this have on our foreign policy? On our relations with the rest of the earth? A lot, I think.

I remember that the White House believed that the Iraqis would welcome our invasion by strewing flowers in our path, such would be their delight with American values, etc. It slackens the jaw. Does no one in the hermetic bubble on Pennsylvania Avenue understand that other peoples have their ways of doing things? That not everybody wants to be American? Two weeks of backpacking around Marrakech and Cairo would disabuse them—but who in the White House has done it?

The American attitude implied in policy, and expressed in the bow-wowish patriotism of much of my e-mail, is that most other countries are backward, if not actually aboriginal, and in need of enlightenment—perhaps armed enlightenment. I find myself asking: how many of these people have spoken to an Iraqi? To any Muslim? Been to Iraq? Been any-

where? Know what countries border Iraq? Have a passport? Know why 622 may have been a year of some relevance?

If I mention that the rest of the world doesn't like the United States, the response usually is, "I'd rather be respected than loved." But the U.S. is not respected. It is feared, like a muscular drunk who comes into a bar looking for a fight. If George and Condoleezza and Rumsnamara had spent a year on a shoestring on the banks of the Mekong in Vientiane and in Rabat and Manaus and Lyon and Istanbul and Managua, we might not be the insular, puzzled country that we are today. And we might not be surprised, over and over, to find that people about whom we know nothing do not behave as we expect. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*The Terminal*]

Lost in Transit

By Steve Sailer

In *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People*, Toby Young's lightly fictionalized memoir of flopping as a celebrity journalist in New York, his humiliations are artfully aggravated by simultaneous spots of preposterous luck enjoyed by his real-life friend Sacha Gervasi, a fellow Fleet Street hack who ventured to Hollywood instead. When Young gets fired from *Vanity Fair*, for example, Gervasi sells a knock-off of "The Full Monty" for a half million.

When I idly checked the invaluable Internet Movie Database last year, however, Gervasi's run of good fortune looked defunct. His new screenplay was a claustrophobic-sounding fable about an Eastern European traveler stuck permanently in an airline terminal: "Waiting for Godot" meets "No Exit," with a dollop of *The Trial* for added moroseness. I couldn't help thinking of "The Simpsons" episode where Krusty the Clown—having lost the rights to feature "Itchy & Scratchy" cartoons—desperately substitutes Communist Czechoslovakia's favorite animated existentialists, "Worker and Parasite."

I gleefully scanned down to see which minor-leaguers had blundered into putting Gervasi's career-killing concept on screen: Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks.

I should have guessed that the only people who would think a script about hanging out at "The Terminal" for nine months sounded like fun would be

superstars so rich that their only recent experience with airports is the five feet of tarmac between the limo and the Gulfstream.

"The Terminal" is certainly more heart-warming than its tagline "Life is waiting" forebodes, but it's forgettable compared to Spielberg and Hanks's last lightweight collaboration, "Catch Me If You Can," not to mention their heavy-weight landmark, "Saving Private Ryan." It's still an above-average movie, but the opportunity cost—the terrific film Spielberg and Hanks could have made together if they weren't piddling their time away on "The Terminal"—is painful to contemplate.

While "The Terminal" aspires to "Groundhog Day's" ultimately uplifting portrayal of a seemingly soul-deadening location, the script lacks that minor classic's extravagant invention and nasty Capraesque wit. Even the man-eating Catherine Zeta-Jones is reduced to a puddle of niceness.

While Hanks's long hot streak at picking good scripts is kaput, his sensible career transition from leading man to character lead is back on track after his iffy con man in "The Ladykillers." He plays Viktor Navorski, a good-hearted Slav (perhaps the cousin of Andy Kaufman's Latka from "Taxi") who disembarks at JFK on the last flight from Krakozhia. A half-completed coup back home plunges the punctilious Homeland Security administrator (Stanley Tucci) into uncertainty over the validity of Viktor's passport, so he temporizes by telling Viktor he must linger indefinitely in the international transit concourse. Being that rare individual, foreign or American, who does not treat our immigration laws with contempt, Viktor dutifully stays put.

Gervasi's premise is neither sensi-

ble—airports have enough trouble keeping domestic homeless people from infesting terminals without the government relegating random foreigners to a life of scavenging saltine crackers at the food court just because yet another coup has occurred—nor satirical. In an age in which a 94-year-old ex-Marine general gets the third degree when his Medal of Honor sets off the metal detector (because we wouldn't want to profile passengers ethnically, now would we?), airport security is ripe for a brutal lam-pooning, but "The Terminal" doesn't even try.

Hanks is excellent, although much of the appeal of his performance is that you say to yourself, "Hey, that guy up there with the Ukrainian accent and beaten-down Warsaw Bloc body language is Mr. All-American Regular Joe." If, instead, Belarus's best actor gave an identical performance, it just wouldn't be the same.

This kind of acting-for-the-sake-of-acting, however, would be more effective on stage, as would a plot limited to one overlit building. While watching the master director's camera swirl extravagantly from one floor to another in the packed concourse, I started to wonder whether Spielberg was filming on location or, as it turned out, had built an entire terminal from scratch. His vast set would be awe-inspiring in a theatre, but the how'd-they-do-that questions it raises on screen just interfere with the unconscious suspension of disbelief that's key to enjoying the more realistic medium of film.

If Gervasi wants to milk his dopey little idea further, he should find a composer and choreographer to turn it into a hit Broadway musical. Toby Young would be apoplectic. ■

Rated a mild PG-13 for some bad language.

BOOKS

[The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition, Thomas Fleming, University of Missouri Press, 279 pages]

Life Beyond Enlightenment

By E. Christian Kopff

IN THE MIDDLE of the 18th century in his chateau at Ferney, Voltaire, the most influential Enlightenment author, turned his wit and style against the Catholic Church with the famous exhortation “*Écrasez l’infâme*”—“Destroy the Infamy!” At the beginning of the 21st century in the industrial town of Rockford, Ill., Thomas Fleming, the editor of *Chronicles*, turns his wit and style against the Enlightenment. Many readers will close his book thinking, “*Écrasez les Lumières*.”

The Enlightenment’s ethical vision has permeated modern thinking. “There is a strange convergence in the style of reasoning employed by international philanthropists, liberal ‘do-gooders,’ and right-to-life activists,” Fleming observes. He uses the name “liberalism” for “the modern ethical tradition” stemming from the Enlightenment, which is characterized by “universality, rationality, individualism, objectivity, and abstract idealism.” In *The Morality of Everyday Life*, Thomas Fleming issues a fundamental challenge to the Enlightenment project and its role in our world.

Americans are immersed in the debates of a presidential election year. It may seem ill-timed to offer them a discussion of the limitations of an intellectual movement hundreds of years old. While Fleming is not shy in noting the contemporary relevance of his theme, he understands that, like Beowulf, he

has to track the dragon of modernity to its lair. This he does in eight dazzling essays. When he faces the monster, he attacks with concrete examples and stories drawn from classical and contemporary literature and a wisdom informed by the Christian tradition. As in his important book *The Politics of Human Nature*, he fights his philosophical battles as an Aristotelian. Aristotle does not deduce a theory from abstract universals. He theorizes on the basis of “the things clearest to us,” his own observations, and the opinions of the good and the wise.

Important modern thinkers have tried to escape the scandal of particularity or prejudice. Descartes, a creative master of geometry, sought a rigorous knowledge of the world by looking for the one thing he could not doubt. That turned out to be the existence of an individual, Descartes himself. Harvard’s John Rawls imagined a society created by individuals who do not know what part they will play in it and so are not biased by personal considerations when they structure it. Both Descartes’ individual and Rawls’s imaginary liberal utopia have influenced the world in which we live.

Neither Descartes nor Rawls fare well at Fleming’s hands, but in the end he rejects not just this or that misguided and misleading thinker or evil consequence of liberalism but its basic concepts and presuppositions. “For the most part, it is not as individuals that we possess rights or exercise duties but as parents and neighbors and citizens.”

Trained as a philologist, Fleming knows the importance of context. Until we know its context, a sentence has no exact meaning or an indefinite number of possible meanings. Similarly the individual is an abstraction. Real human beings exist as participants in real societies as, e.g., parents, children, citizens or subjects, and believers. Even this list is too abstract. They are not parents, but mothers and fathers; not children, but sons and daughters; not citizens, but Chinese, Germans, Russians, Americans.

“The point of thinking,” Regis Debray says, “is not to find the general rule which applies to every situation, but to uncover the right response to the problem you are facing.” The traditional philologist is interested not in general rules but in rules of thumb. He wants to know what words Shakespeare or Aeschylus actually wrote in this context in this play for this character. To succeed he must use all the resources afforded him by science, observation, and tradition. We make moral and political decisions the same way. It is not our job to define the general rule we all must follow and will for everybody else to follow, as Kant and Rawls thought. We are looking for what is right for *me* (in morality) or for *us* (in politics), and there is no way to look up that answer in the back of the book or deduce it from abstract principles.

Can we then never draw general conclusions? We can and must. Free trade is good in some situations and not in others, but global free trade will always be wrong. Each of the world’s many cultures has its own beauties and defects, but a worldwide monoculture must be an abomination. When the obligations of our different roles come into conflict, we must choose, but never as abstract individuals outside of social context.

What is true in morality is true in politics. Federalism is better than centralization because it encourages decision-making on the level that is closest to those who know the facts and will have to live with them. Society begins with the family, the foundation of morality and politics, as Fleming insists, following Aristotle. Then come institutions that allow the family to flourish: community, church, private associations, state, nation.

These institutions, from family to nation, represent many levels of political authority. A healthy society conducts most of its business on the lower levels. By that standard, America is no longer healthy. It is run by a centralizing and dysfunctional liberal regime out of touch with real human needs. Fleming saw this in *The Politics of Human*

Nature: “The notion of individual rights, as useful as it may be in some settings, obscures the true bases of civil order by investing those rights in the individual, instead of in family, kin, and community.” To defend the individual the central authority assumes more and more power. Ironically, individualism leads to centralization. That is why Americans find themselves at the mercy of a political and intellectual elite determined to remake them through public schools undermining traditional mores, judicial activism trumping legislative consensus, and global free trade uprooting their traditional way of life.

The Morality of Everyday Life is not a political tract, and Fleming criticizes both conservatives and liberals. The implied critique of the rhetoric of the right-to-life movement is especially welcome. Children do not have a right to life;

By stating the principle in abstract—rather than concrete and historical—terms Pius XI left it exposed to misuse. Almost inevitably, the modernizing John XXIII turned subsidiarity on its head and used it to justify state ownership and even intervention into national and local affairs by ‘the public authority of the world community.’ For all its virtues, subsidiarity is a less useful concept than federalism.”

The change in Fleming’s position (symbolized typographically by the fact that the word “church” is usually capitalized in *Morality*, rarely in *Politics*) vitiates his central arguments. It is incoherent for a defender of federalism and local community to privilege a church polity that is a highly centralized global organization. For Fleming, the best society

not retract his earlier writings, however. It was a case of too little, too late.

Google searches reveal that his influence is alive and well at Notre Dame’s Jacques Maritain Center but uncover no centers named for Catholic traditionalists like Joseph de Maistre or Juan Donoso Cortés. As the Catholic journalist Rod Dreher wrote recently, “Generally speaking (and despite what the secular media think), the Catholic Left holds most of the institutional power within the American church.” This situation is also true in Europe.

The triumph of the Left in the Catholic Church was predicted in 1928 by traditionalist Julius Evola in *Pagan Imperialism*, a short book made up of equal measures of youthful extravagance and brilliant insight. Fleming, like many American dissidents, pays little attention to the European Right. He mentions Evola once in a sentence where he mischaracterizes him, misspells his name (given correctly in the footnote), and misrepresents his position. (Evola knew perfectly well that the Roman character was as rare in ancient as it is in modern Italy.) A better knowledge of conservative revolutionaries and other European opponents of liberalism would have strengthened Fleming’s impressive assault on the Enlightenment Project.

While others are attacking the liberal regime on its flanks, Fleming has mounted a frontal assault on the enemy’s key positions. He strikes at individualism and abstract rationalism in the defense of family, kin, community, and tradition. No more important book has been published in this new century. If the American people ever win back their traditional way of life, founded on family, faith, and federalism, *The Morality of Everyday Life* will be remembered as an important milestone in that victory. ■

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IRONICALLY, INDIVIDUALISM LEADS TO CENTRALIZATION.

parents have a duty not to kill their children. No court can change that. Yet, as powerfully written as this book is, there are subtle changes from *The Politics of Human Nature* that I find troubling.

A key concept in Fleming’s thought is what he called in *Politics* “the Federal Principle.” For Fleming this principle was best articulated by the 17th-century Protestant thinker Althusius and was embodied in the United States Constitution of 1787 as implemented by the early presidents. Per Althusius, human beings are primarily members of groups: family, kin, community, state. Each group is composed of those below it, has its own appropriate sphere of authority, and respects the spheres of the rest. (For example, nations should not educate children, while communities should not have a foreign policy.) The parallel doctrine in Catholic social thought is called “subsidiarity.” Rooted in Aquinas’s Aristotelian vision, it was affirmed by Pope Pius XI in the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Fleming quotes Pius XI in both books, but in *Politics* he subjected him to a compelling critique.

grows from family, kin, and community. It places severe limits on central authority and respects traditional mores. The best church polity should mirror this situation. To be consistent, Fleming should privilege respect for tradition over *ex cathedra* statements from a central authority. He should ground the religious life of the believer in the local congregation, not a distant bureaucracy. This is true *a fortiori* when the bureaucracy’s functionaries intervene in the spheres of nation and state to promote a liberal agenda by encouraging mass immigration or opposing the death penalty.

Fleming criticizes the “spell of a rigid neo-Thomism” on Catholic moral thinking but then praises by implication Jacques Maritain. It would be wonderful to see a return to the spirit of Aquinas, which Josef Pieper presented as a humane rethinking of Aristotle in the light of the whole classical and Christian tradition. Even a rigid Thomistic literalism, however, is better than the soft liberalism of Maritain and his disciples, which led directly to Vatican II. Maritain finally rejected some aspects of its spirit. He did

[*The Lessons of Terror: A History of Warfare Against Civilians: Why It Has Always Failed and Why It Will Fail Again*, Caleb Carr, Random House, 320 pages]

Worse than a Crime

By John Zmirak

ON THE FACE of it, novelist and military historian Caleb Carr ought to be anathema to conservatives. His skillful murder mystery *The Alienist*, set in late 19th-century New York, is politically noxious in a dreadfully predictable way. Its heroes are reforming politicians and a pioneering psychologist, and the chief villain is a corrupt Catholic prelate. Like so many historical novels, *The Alienist* panders to the present-day reader and his prejudices. Instead of bringing to life the mindset of people in the past, rendering credible and sympathetic older worldviews so as to deepen our understanding of how these change over time, it sets up as heroes the radicals of its era. We're invited to cheer on their Manichean struggle against hidebound reactionaries and bigots who stand in the way of Progress—which always tends, of course, towards the very mores and ideology of enlightened postmodernists. Remember how Hegel saw the absolute culmination of the entire history of the universe—matter and spirit and God's own unfolding of His divine nature—in the Prussian state of his day? How silly of him. We know so very much better today, now that we've reached the real End of History. Reading about the past rendered this way amounts to a protracted act of self-congratulation—like liberals chuckling and cooing over their own baby pictures.

A shorter work Carr published not long before Sept. 11, 2001 is far more troubling—and surely proved embarrassing. Called *Killing Time*, the novel imagines a suffocating anti-utopian

future, one dominated by a globalist capitalist world empire based in North America. The heroes of the novel are a cult of cyber-terrorists—a kind of hipster's al-Qaeda—fighting the Great Satan from their base in ... Afghanistan. Ahem. You can see how Carr might be anxious to distance himself from this particular novel—for instance, by drawing on his training in military history to write a book on how to respond to terrorism.

And yet, for all that, *The Lessons of Terror* is an important book. Because of the volume's vast ambitions, Carr makes some significant mistakes, and he indulges in various distortions imposed by his (thick) ideological filter. But the central point of his short historical study ought to be taken seriously—indeed, it should inform our future discussion of terrorism and the “war” launched against it. Carr defines terror not as asymmetrical warfare, nor as the struggle of non-state elements against established governments, nor even as a species of guerrilla combat (which he rightly distinguishes from terror *per se*). Nor is terror the outgrowth of religious fundamentalism, nor even of a potent ideology, as would suit neoconservative thinkers, who try to paint contemporary politics in stark black and white as a confrontation between the forces of civilization, freedom, and democracy and the evil proponents of fanaticism and savagery. Instead, Carr uses a definition drawn from the morally richer vocabulary of traditional Western Christian Just War teaching: he describes terror simply as warfare waged against civilians, either intentionally or indiscriminately, with the goal of breaking their will to fight.

Terrorism is a tactic, not an abstract moral category or an outgrowth from the dark underbelly of a particular religion. It's a technique of fighting wars, one that has been used by governments as well as guerrilla and revolutionary movements—in fact, much more frequently and viciously by the former. Carr goes back as far as the history of Rome, pointing to the “punitive” wars undertaken by the late Republic and the Empire against Carthage and the

German tribesmen across the Rhine. But it would be easy to go further—think of the slaughters recorded in the *Iliad* and the Old Testament, and depicted graphically in the artworks of Assyria and Egypt. Since the dawn of man's bloody history, it has been rare indeed for warriors to distinguish between combatant and non-combatant; in fact, as one may read between the lines in Carr's account, this distinction is one more artifact of the Christian West—although one that has far too often been disregarded even by soldiers bearing the banner of the cross.

This conceptual clarification is extremely important, recasting the issue of terror in a coherent moral framework that can be applied across historical contexts and to a wide variety of military antagonists: Roman soldiers, Viking raiders, Norman crusaders, guerrilla warriors, resistance fighters, illegal combatants, British air force generals, and American counterintelligence agents alike—whoever targets civilians intentionally as a means of making war falls under the same scrutiny. And opprobrium. Commendably, Carr agrees with the Just War teachings of Christianity that civilians can never be justifiably attacked as primary targets—not even when they are engaged in producing armaments or materiel which contributes to a war effort. Nor can cities be bombed indiscriminately, either to break the fighting spirit of their inhabitants or to pummel an enemy's infrastructure into oblivion and starve its army of weapons and supplies. Applying such a standard, a consistent moralist must condemn the Allied bombing campaigns conducted against German population centers such as Dresden and the destruction of Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki—air assaults which one of their chief authors, Gen. Curtis LeMay, admitted to his subordinate Robert McNamara, “would get us tried as war criminals if we lost.” (This quote, along with profound, rueful reflections about the nature of modern conflict, can be found in the stunning recent documentary “The Fog of War,” a feature-length interview with

McNamara conducted by filmmaker Errol Morris.) As Carr makes clear, the willingness of Westerners to exempt their own governments from the obligation to spare civilians from harm wherever possible empowers the cynical murderers of al-Qaeda, giving credence to their charge that we are a pack of hypocrites—weeping copiously when our office workers and firemen die but serenely shrugging off the sufferings of our enemies' innocent bystanders.

The historical perspective Carr provides shows that the modern concept of "total war" is in fact nothing new, certainly not the logical or necessary outcome of centuries' experience, much less the result of intellectual "progress." Instead, it is an archaic throwback, an atavistic abandonment of the West's own moral heritage. I wish that Carr had chosen to examine more fully the origins of "total war," particularly of strate-

gic bombing; he would have found them in the 1920s, as military theorists examined the experience of World War I for lessons in how to avoid another draining conflict of attrition. As West Point historian Williamson Murray demonstrates in his history of the Luftwaffe, *Strategy for Defeat*, these elite thinkers looked to Czarist Russia, Imperial Germany, and the Habsburg Monarchy—all of which collapsed politically long before their forces were comprehensively defeated on the field—and concluded that the way to end a war in the modern era was to demoralize the civilian population so that it lost the will to fight and thus force a surrender. Conveniently (for their theories), the rapid development of aircraft made it practical to target population centers and to test this theory on a grand, destructive scale.

Everywhere it was tried, this strategy failed. The Nazi devastation of Holland

and Poland, the Battle of Britain, the German siege of Leningrad; on the Allied side, the massive bombing of German and Japanese cities—in no case did strategic bombing or other measures aimed at civilians produce a popular revolt against the military that brought down the government. In fact, the principal usefulness of aircraft in World War II was in close combat support—a fact that the Germans overlooked, massively wasting resources on city-busting strategic bombers instead of the short-range dive bombers that had actually helped them conquer much of Europe by disrupting and demoralizing troops.

It's important to make this point. Those who reject traditional moral strictures on the conduct of combat and embrace total war tend to do so under the rubric of realism and pragmatic necessity. But as Carr makes abundantly clear in case after case—starting with Rome, but proceeding

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episodically up through the Irish Civil War, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and the second, self-destructive Palestinian intifada—targeting civilians is almost always completely counterproductive. It is worse than a crime; it's a blunder. Drawing on the evidence of history, Carr shows again and again that whatever harm is done to enemy morale by assaults on civilians quickly diminishes, replaced by moral outrage and a commitment to revenge. The reaction of Americans in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001 is only the most recent and vivid example. There are literally dozens adduced throughout Carr's book, and it is hard to find many counter-examples. In the course of his book, Carr shows that the decision to spare noncombatants, though it finds support in the moral injunctions of St. Augustine and other Just War theorists, only began to be practiced widely when soldiers themselves saw the uselessness of their attacks on innocents. It turned out that the very military discipline required to keep soldiers from devastating civilians also produced a much more effective fighting force—while generating far less popular resistance from conquered populations.

Ironically, Carr was a prominent supporter of the recent invasion of Iraq, and a cheerleader for Donald Rumsfeld's attempt to create a smaller, more disci-

plined American military that could fight wars that—theoretically—could conquer our enemies without devastating their infrastructures. In the wake of the scandal of Abu Ghraib, with its incalculable consequences for Arab public opinion, it is likely that Carr has re-examined his admiration for the secretary of defense. Clearly the small, professional force required for defeating the wretched Iraqi army was nothing like the massive security and social-services Leviathan needed to remake

Carr nor most American politicians dares embrace: restricting immigration from nations that generate terrorism as one of their chief exports and controlling our national borders. With America's southern frontier virtually ungarded, the elaborate visa restrictions and airport security installed after 9/11 are an expensive charade.

Carr has many such blind spots—including an abiding prejudice that leads him to minimize atrocities committed by Protestant regimes and exaggerate those

THE MILITARY DISCIPLINE REQUIRED TO KEEP SOLDIERS FROM DEVASTATING CIVILIANS ALSO PRODUCED AN EFFECTIVE FIGHTING FORCE.

Iraq into an American democratic ally—if such a thing were ever possible in the first place. It is also increasingly obvious that the most effective weapon against terror is not the pre-emptive invasion of potential sponsor states, followed by prolonged and ugly occupation, but rather the careful infiltration and prosecution of terrorists by domestic intelligence agencies—the very approach that has been taken by nations with much more experience of dealing with terrorism, namely the Europeans. Of course, there is one more measure that neither

of Catholic rulers, and to portray the Crusades as a clerical conspiracy to deflect Western aggression onto a mostly innocent Islamic world. He neglects the fact that the territories over which most of the Crusades were fought were still majority Christian when the First Crusade was launched; they were occupied territories, subjugated by Arab warlords who conducted a centuries-long, ultimately successful policy of cultural genocide. (For documentation, see Bat Ye'or's unmatched history *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam*.) For all their flaws, the Crusades began as a legitimate war of liberation, every bit as justified as the invasion of Normandy.

Nevertheless, this is a worthy book. Carr makes a powerful case that the carefully developed, highly artificial "laws of war" that emerged from the Christian Just War tradition are not abstract ethical injunctions that impede the successful prosecution of an attack; instead, they represent good sense, the practical wisdom distilled by generations of soldiers and statesmen who together came to see both the evil and the stupidity of aiming to kill women and children first. ■

John Zmirak is the author of the upcoming A Bad Catholic's Guide to Good Living.

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Rediscovering Belloc's Verse

By Jonathan Chaves

This is the faith that I have held
and hold,
And this is that in which I mean
to die.

—Hilaire Belloc

ACROSS THE STREET from the entrance to Princeton University stands one of my favorite bookstores, Micawber Books, and I visit there late each August when I go to Princeton to address the Luce Scholars, a group of young graduate students and professionals preparing to spend a year in Asia.

On a recent trip, a sober tan volume beckoned to me from the shelves of the poetry section, which I always go to first, and it proved to be a first edition of Hilaire Belloc's *Sonnets and Verse*, published in 1924. It is now a prized possession.

Conservatives know Belloc (1870-1953) primarily as the author of the classic *The Servile State* (1912), listed as one of the "Great Books of the Conservative Tradition" by Jeffrey O. Nelson in his pamphlet, "Ten Books that Shaped America's Conservative Renaissance." In this work, Belloc laid out the principles of Distributism—the "third way" between large-scale, "plutocratic" capitalism and socialism—championed by Belloc and his friend and associate G.K. Chesterton, a system by which private property would be sacrosanct but would remain small-scale, as it had been for centuries before the emergence of modern corporatism.

I was also aware that Belloc was a superb essayist and had penned some of the finest travel writing in modern literature, such masterpieces as *The Path to Rome* (1902) and the miniature gems in *Hills and the Sea* (1906). And then I knew Belloc's *The Great Heresies*, in which he had written with a foresight

that today seems nothing less than prophetic, "Millions of people ... of Europe and America have forgotten all about Islam They take for granted that it is just a foreign religion which will not concern them. It is, in fact, the most formidable and persistent enemy which our civilization has had [T]he story is by no means over; the power of Islam may at any moment re-arise." Can we read these words, written in 1938, without a chill today?

Like Chesterton, Belloc turns out to have been a poet of distinction, today largely ignored as such because, again like Chesterton's, his poetry is metrical and rhymed and utterly at odds with the modernist mainstream of the day that the academy has long since established as the only stylistic option worthy of respect. Very recently, R.J. Stove has, happily, recalled attention in these pages to Belloc's accomplishment in verse. But when I came upon this book three years ago, virtually no contemporary writer seemed to have noticed this aspect of his *oeuvre*. Of course, Belloc's hilarious comic poems in *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts* (1897) are still in print with Dover Books and are still fairly widely read. I had known of them before finding *Sonnets and Verse*, and considered "The Hippopotamus" to be perhaps the finest couplet ever written:

I shoot the Hippopotamus with
bullets made of platinum,
Because if I use leaden ones, his
hide is sure to flatten 'em.

But even in this delightful book, and the follow-up volume, *More Beasts for Worse Children* (1898), Belloc had used humor to make quite profound points about the errors of modernity, as in my favorite, "The Microbe":

The Microbe is so very small
You cannot make him out at all,
But many sanguine people hope
To see him through a microscope.
His jointed tongue that lies
beneath

A hundred curious rows of teeth;
His seven tufted tails with lots
of lovely pink and purple spots
On each of which a pattern stands,
Composed of forty separate
bands;
His eyebrows of a tender green;
All these have never yet
been seen—
But Scientists, who ought to know,
Assure us that they must be so ...
Oh! let us never, never doubt
What nobody is sure about!

This must be one of the first expressions, if not the very first, of the key insight that scientists, driven more by scientism than by true science, have dogma of faith themselves, allowing mere hypotheses to take on the coloration of established facts.

But it was with true astonishment that I read my new purchase and discovered that not only was Belloc a good serious poet, he was outstanding! Of course, the satiric poems were consistent with the great sense of humor displayed in the books of beasts; and so such a poem as "Lines to a Don," defending Chesterton against an attack by a contemporary academic, was not as much of a surprise as others:

Remote and ineffectual Don
That dared attack my Chesterton,
With that poor weapon,
half-impelled,
Unlearned, unsteady, hardly held,
Unworthy for a tilt with men—
Your quavering and corroded pen;
Don poor at Bed and worse
at Table,
Don pinched, Don starved,
Don miserable;
Don stuttering, Don with
roving eyes,
Don nervous, Don of crudities ...

And this is only the beginning. The poem goes on for three pages, drawing a devastating portrait of a type all too familiar to us today, the academic who hides, beneath an exterior of effeminacy and mincing politeness, a smoldering

rage against any who advocate for Truth. This is invective par excellence.

Perhaps too it was expected that he would tackle Catholic themes, as he was, of course, a devout Catholic. His "Ballade to Our Lady of Czestochowa," which Stove correctly links to the great Metaphysical tradition in English poetry (one thinks especially of Richard Crashaw), is one of the most convincing poetic expressions of religious devotion in modern English poetry:

Lady and Queen and Mystery
manifold
And very Regent of the untroubled
sky,
Whom in a dream St. Hilda
did behold
And heard a woodland music
passing by:
You shall receive me when the
clouds are high
With evening and the sheep
attain the fold.
This is the faith that I have held
and hold,
And this is that in which I mean
to die ...

But less expected, and in fact, to a literary historian such as myself, exciting to discover, was that Belloc wrote a

series of 31 untitled sonnets that must simply be considered among the finest of this noble type in all of modern English poetry! I limit myself to quoting one, the 15th, in its entirety:

Your life is like a little winter's day
Whose sad sun rises late to set
too soon;
You have just come—why will you
go away,
Making an evening of what should
be noon?
Your life is like a little flute
complaining
A long way off, beyond the
willow trees;
A long way off, and nothing left
remaining
But memory of a music on the
breeze.

Your life is like a pitiful
leave-taking
Wept in a dream before a man's
awaking,
A Call with only shadows
to attend:
A Benediction whispered and
belated
Which has no fruit beyond a
consecrated,
A consecrated silence at the end.

Until reading this, my favorite poem on the most painful and challenging of subjects, the death of a child, was written by the great Chinese painter and poet Shen Chou (1427-1509); I had published my translation of it in 1986:

"Consoling Wu Te-cheng on the
Death of His Son"

In mourning for your second son,
you have written six poems
and still not expressed
the depth of your sorrow.
But weeping bitter tears
will bring no relief—
you will find his spirit
everywhere.

Inscribe an epitaph on jade
from the western mountains
for your family's lost treasure,
this pearl
sunk in the ocean.

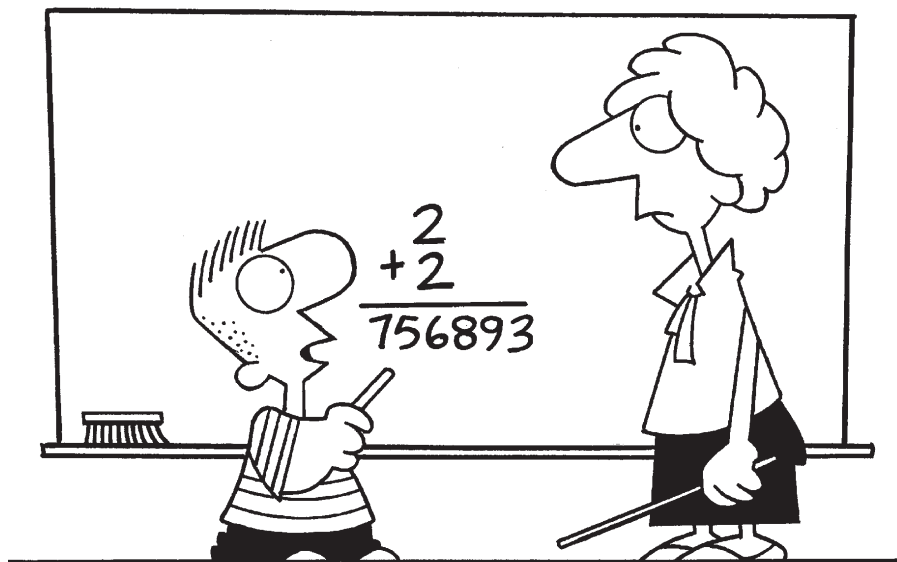
And the spring is still beautiful;
old as you are,
you have planted orchids—
watch them sprout
and bear blossoms
in time.

And there is something almost Chinese in Belloc's perfect image of the "little flute complaining ... beyond the willow trees."

But when one realizes that Belloc also compares the child's brief existence to "a dream before a man's awaking," the poignant possibility emerges that his sonnet is addressed to the soul of one of the untold millions of children who died before even having had the opportunity to be born.

Here is a man who keeps alive in the modern age the great traditions of religious faith and transcendent poetry, and in works such as his 15th sonnet, joins them in a perfect marriage. ■

Jonathan Chaves is a professor of Chinese at The George Washington University and is the co-author, with Stephen Addiss, of Old Taoist: The Life, Art and Poetry of Kodojin (1865-1944).



"In an increasingly complex world,
sometimes old questions require new answers."

Sloppy Clothes, Shabby Manners



I shall spare you commenting on 957 pages of psychobabble, namely how the American version of Ahmad Chalabi became such a fluent liar.

Bill Clinton's opus about his "parallel lives" bores me stiff. As he always reminded us during Monicagate, we should move on. But he came to mind as I boarded an airplane to fly to the birthplace of selective democracy—Athens, Greece, to be exact. On board were two royal Greek princes, Pavlos and Nikolaos, both dressed impeccably and simply, the way gentlemen used to dress when traveling. I was a little worse for wear, pun intended, but with a blazer and proper slacks. Just as familiarity breeds contempt, informality generates disrespect. As soon as we were airborne, an obviously stressed stewardess addressed me by my first name. "How nice to know we were in school together," I told her with a smile. I was using the Harold Pinter defense. The playwright has many faults, but he is a master of the devastating retort when he feels a lack of civility towards his person. When addressed as "Harold" by total strangers, he either ignores them or asks them about school. It might sound pompous, but Pinter was born very poor in east London and obviously learned good manners from his hard-working parents.

Clinton and his asides to students about his underwear are typical of the vulgar times in which we live. But he is not alone. At the G8 summit on Sea Island, Ga., the only man who dressed properly was—dare I say it?—the president of France. Everyone else was "smart casual," but Gap dress does little to dignify high office. Man-of-the-people matiness was started by Bill Clinton, with his grotesque running shorts and sneakers while playing golf. The reason Clinton went for "smart casual" had, as

in everything he did, an ulterior motive: "You can trust me, I am not wearing a suit." Real '60s stuff. Commenting on Chirac's wearing a necktie while the rest lounged around in ugly "smart casual," a man with the unfortunate name of Kenneth Dreyfack wrote in the *International Herald Tribune* that a tie makes one look priggish and a nerd, "exactly the kind of weirdo no one wants to get stuck sitting next to at a party."

Sorry Dreyfack (I hope I'm pronouncing your name wrong), but it is exactly the opposite. There is nothing wrong with formality, and a hell of a lot wrong with familiarity. Wearing a tracksuit on an airplane might be comfortable, but I find it slightly disrespectful. "Clothes make the man," said the Mississippi sage, Mark Twain, and casual dress has always shown itself to be a threat to good order and decorum. Those ghastly hippies, among whom Bill Clinton hid from the draft, not only lacked social graces, they made casual dress a uniform of disrespect for tradition and Western culture. The arrogant disdain shown by them was matched only by their selfishness and greed. And speaking of greed, Hollywood types, people like David Geffen and Oliver Stone, love casual. Geffen, extolling gay power, wears sneakers and a T-shirt with his dinner jacket. Michael Moore, a legendary slob, ditto.

Popular culture teaches us that fashion should be liberating. It is a clumsy argument made by philistines who possess the sensibilities of a Stalinist bureaucrat and the taste of Barbra Streisand. The shabbiness of the modern man—and woman, mind you—comes at the expense of a society

unashamed of its vices. Smart dress has nothing to do with class or wealth. It has to do with pride, taste, and a sense of achievement. After all, when was the last time you saw a mugger wearing a tailcoat and top hat? Gentlemen, however, often do.

But more of Dreyfack. "It's no accident that the first thing repressive institutions such as the armed forces or prisons do to establish control over individuals is to make them change their clothing," he writes in the *IHT*. What can one say when reading such rubbish? It is a carefully embellished myth that dressing casual is in some way standing shoulder to shoulder with the electorate against the establishment, and that in being well dressed one is in some way decadent, snobby, and treacherous. This is why we have in one generation gone from a formal, well-behaved society into the casual modernity that uses the F-word constantly and sees soap-opera stars and badly-behaved, women-bashing multi-millionaire basketball players as role models.

Hollywood has a lot to answer for. High glamour ruled the place during its golden age. Remember that wonderful picture of the great Gary Cooper and Clark Gable in white tie drinking champagne? It was uplifting and as graceful as Fred Astaire, yet another gent. Now the aforementioned Streisand sports thrift-store cast-offs while pretending to be a woman of the people. But I'd hate to be a poor person trespassing by mistake on her property, or a young surfer landing on David Geffen's private beach. (Unless he's gay, that is.) Modern actors look like bag ladies and act worse. Somehow it is all dreadfully unconvincing. An average Joe does not have to look like a Hollywood slob, but then average Joes usually have far more dignity than Hollywood types and America's 42nd president. ■

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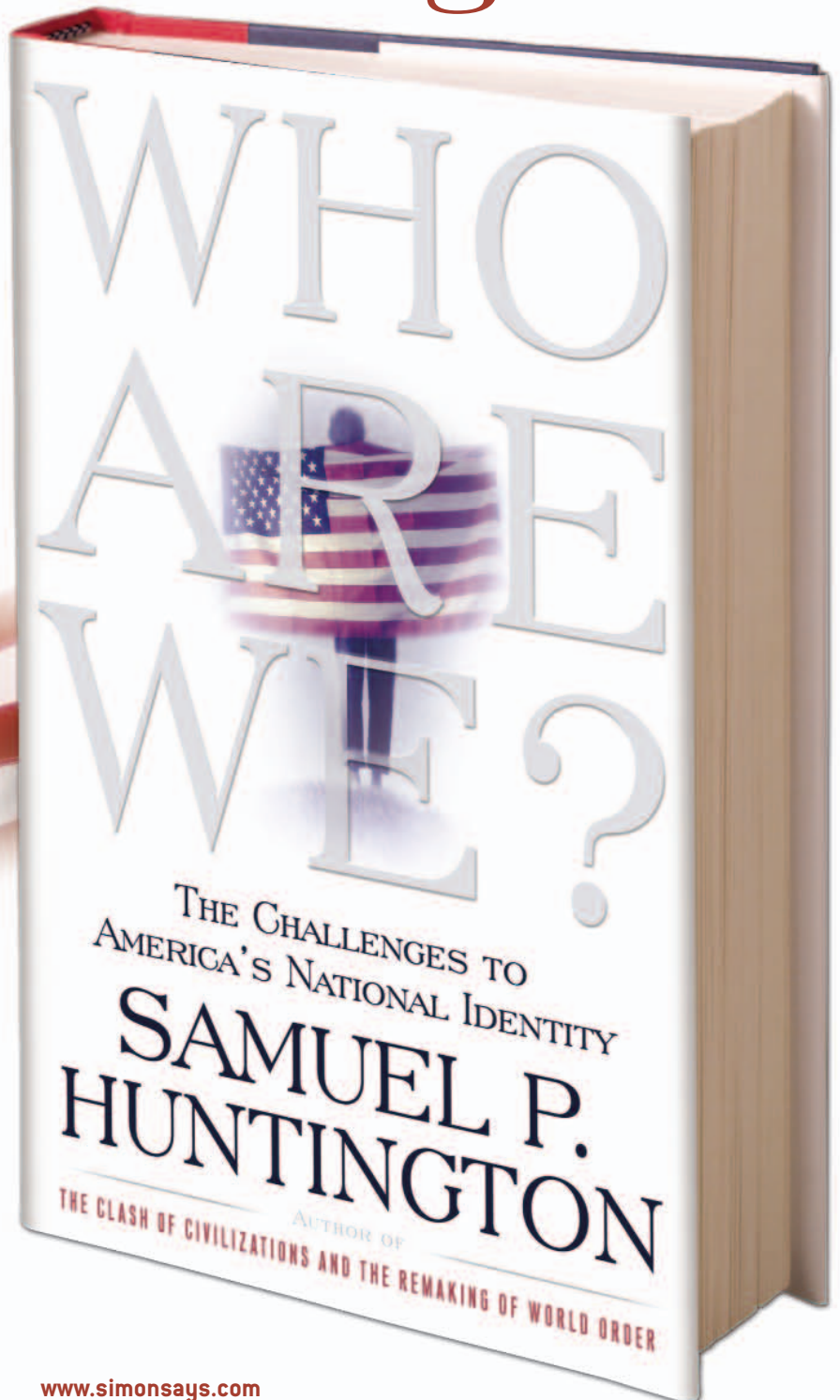
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